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The MAN WITH THREE NAMES

Harold Mac Grath

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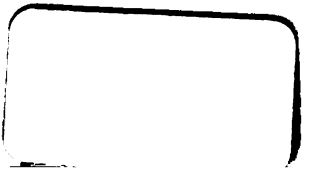

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THE MAN WITH THREE NAMES

BY

HAROLD MAC GRATH

Author of
"The Man on the Box"
"The Private Wire to Washington"
"The Yellow Typhoon," etc.

ILLUSTRATED BY RALPH PALLEN COLEMAN

GARDEN CITY NEW YORK
DOUBLEDAY, PAGE & COMPANY
1920

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THE MAN WITH THREE NAMES

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The Man With Three Names

CHAPTER I

THEY say—the old wives—that the soul of Galahad will never take wing because, on the day of his physical death, the white soul of him broke into infinitesimal pieces. This will no doubt greatly astonish the benevolent shades of Walter Map and Sir Thomas Mallory. But trust old wives to know what they are talking about. And they proceed to add another amazing fact: that these floating particles find lodgment in the hearts of young men, die there, or grow ripely according to the quality of the soil. For me, this remarkable information clears up a lot of fog. I understand now why Youth steps forward so bravely and confidently to admonish a naughty world. 'Tis the leaven of Sir Galahad.

Once upon a time, far away in the Golden Age—as far away as the summer of nineteen hundred and twelve—when Mars, grim and bloody, was only grumbling in his sleep, there sailed from

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Liverpool a great and seemly ship. That her maritime bones are disintegrating on the bottom of the sea at this moment has no exact bearing upon this tale. For it is not a war story; it is not even predicated upon war; but without that lurid sky in the East, a certain good fairy might have passed to and fro without being recognized.

Naturally, before a ship may put to sea, passengers have to come aboard. And there is always some confusion when visitors are ordered ashore. The line of passengers surging up the first-class gangplank paused. Doubtless somebody forward had dropped a parcel.

A young man, sartorially correct from his tan shoes to the mellow panama on his beautifully modelled head, craned his straight columnar neck impatiently. But of course he could not see anything. Suddenly he became conscious of the odour of violets. It came from behind; so he turned his head.

Supposing your consciousness had been filled for hours with the beauty of a woman's face. Say that you had seen it but once for the duration of a dinner hour, at a table half way across the huge dining room of the Savoy, and you knew that you would never forget it. Supposing you had built an airy romance during that hour: an adventure wherein you rescued her from an unknown danger,

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fell in love with her and married her. Supposing you had been all alone in mighty London that night, with no place to go, with a heart which was heavy with bitterness because fate had dealt you marked cards in the game of life and cheated you abominably; and on top of all this, a super-imagination which is given only to genius. And then, by a mere twist of the head, to see that face again but three spans away from yours!

Some men are fortunate; they know exactly what they want the moment they see it. Instantly this young man knew that one of life's great problems was solved. This was the girl. Somewhere, somehow, he was going to meet her. The mere beauty of her face would not have trapped his fancy and held it. He had a peculiar gift, this odd young man, of plunging his glance through human masks and getting glimpses of souls. And he had seen at once that this young woman had a soul quite as beautiful as her face. This faculty was occult; he had always possessed it, and he had long since given up trying to analyze the gift.

She was lovely. That was the word. He knew that lovely was a universe all by itself; for it embodied beauty and intellect, valour and tenderness, youth and purity. Being a poet among other things, he knew that the word was the despair of

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poetical inkpots; it was rhymeless. A happy word; it possessed the tender aloofness of the evening star and defied rhetorical abuse.

The westering sun was in her eyes; thus, she was unconscious of the amazed scrutiny of the young man in front. She saw only a nebulous shadow. Immediately he called her the girl with the golden eyes. This, however, was only a flight of poetical fancy. As a matter of fact, her eyes were intensely blue; but shooting out from the pupil to the rim of the iris were fine little threads of gold such as one sees in lapis lazuli.

The line began to move again. The young man had no plan regarding his future procedure; he would need an hour or two of solitude for the formation of this. He was going to marry her in the end; that much was definitely settled. That she might have her own views on the subject was of no vital importance.

He hurried off to his first-class cabin, stowed his luggage, changed; then, with a straw suitcase under his arm, took up his quarters in the steerage. For he had work to do, serious work. He could have lived like the other first-class passengers, in idleness and luxury; but he was always in earnest, whether he played or worked, as will be seen. For six days he was determined to live among the steerage passengers. To acquire the material he

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needed necessitated contact, not casual observation.

That night, as he leaned against the rail—a thousand ineffectual plans having been scrutinized and rejected—he permitted a whimsical idea to enter his head. He raised his face toward the summer moon and laughed. Why not? To approach the affair from a novel and unexpected angle: no winding in and out, no foreground to traverse with hesitant step. To take the plunge without bothering to feel the water with his fingers. The idea appealed to all that was romantic in him. Indeed, the affair would serve as a vent for that bothersome strain of romanticism that was always undermining his serious work. What a queer, contradictory codger he was! Wanting to dig down into the roots of things, to know all phases of life, and yet to feel the eternal tug of wings!

Another thought lifted its head, ugly and sinister; but he crushed it down, smothered it. He had a right to happiness. Muck and star-dust; but the muck was not of his making, and the star-dust was all his own.

The eyes of her! The beautiful curve of her chin! Like a bolt of lightning, when woman had not been in his thoughts at all.

After all, he mused, the only real fun in life was to catch at some whimsical idea, imprison it in the

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heart, and then follow through. Wasn't that the golden text of all true adventurers? Blindman's Buff, with sharp edges of circumstances barking your shins and Irony laughing behind your back! And the charm of it lay in the fact that you never could tell when or how it would end.

Her name was Elizabeth Mansfield, and they probably called her Betty. She was also the daughter of Dunleigh Mansfield. That put a double wall around her, millions and social prestige: tremendous obstacles which should have frightened him and chilled his ardour, whereas they but filled him with elation.

Crusaders and explorers and reformers are unique in that they attack an ordinary goal in an extraordinary manner, so differently from the ordinary man's way that they become the object of the ordinary man's derision.

Now then, this young man was a crusader, with an ideal quite as lofty as that of Peter the Hermit and Walter the Penniless. He did not sally forth joyously with chanting and banners; he would not have gone forth at all but for the white honesty of his soul. He had inherited this obligation; it had been thrust upon him without asking his leave. But as yet he wandered in a maze: doors that he could not open, walls that he could not scale, knowing that over there and beyond was the goal.

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His sword had no handle, his shield no grip. The way out, the way out; and he could not find it. He was a crusader by force of circumstance.

And here a little eddy of sentiment had turned him temporarily from the search. Love! Why not? He accepted it with the spirit of inconsequent recklessness. Having no Cumæan sibyl at his elbow, he could not foresee that this little eddy was to wear a breach in the wall for him to slip through.

As he climbed into his smelly bunk, there was but one idea in his head—to carry the outpost, her father, by storm. Two things were possible. Either Mansfield would listen or he would call for a deck-steward. Anyhow, to put it to the touch!

Dunleigh Mansfield was not the accepted type of the steel magnate. He had not come out of nowhere, from nothing. His father had been somebody, his grandfather, his great-grandfather; a race of gentlemen born. He had inherited his steel mills, his mines; and he had multiplied their value beyond ordinary computation. He might have passed for an elderly beau in a Pinero drama: a fine, courtly figure of a man, with a cold hawky countenance, quite handsome, with scarcely a gray hair in his head though he was fifty.

He was standing alone, that sunny morning, in the corner where the crossrail joins the port. He

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was, fortunately for the welfare of this story, in an amiable frame of mind. The cigar he was smoking possessed an extremely agreeable flavour.

"Mr. Mansfield?"

The ironmonger turned. He saw a hatless young man in a white cotton shirt, open at the throat, shiny blue serge trousers that bagged at the knees, and a pair of soiled tennis shoes.

"I am Mr. Mansfield"—coldly.

"I wish the honour of paying court to your daughter."

Mansfield was not quite sure he had heard aright. "I beg pardon?"

The young man repeated his astounding request.

Stormy words burned the tip of Mansfield's tongue, but he pressed them back because the face he looked into was quite as handsome and hawky as his own. He saw besides a mouth as tender as a young mother's and a pair of gray eyes that at present were kindly and engaging. Human faces were Dunleigh Mansfield's books. He recognized this type: the brow and eye of a dreamer, the nose and jaw of a fighting man. Here was a young man who would do unexpected things—thrust Sisyphus aside and try to roll the stone uphill himself. But Betty?—he asked the honour to pay court to Betty? The infernal impudence! A fellow from the steerage, for all his good looks.

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Being a gentleman born, Mansfield's face did not indicate his anger and indignation. The thing was to get rid of the bounder without creating a scene.

"You don't look insane, young man. Are you offering me a pleasantry?"

"No, Mr. Mansfield. I was never more serious."

"You have perhaps met me somewhere, and I have forgotten?"

"I have never met you before."

"You have met my daughter, then?"

"I have only seen her—once as we came up the gangplank."

"Ah!" said Mansfield, as if this information cleared the air considerably. A doubt began to edge into his mind. This was some kind of a joke, possibly a fool wager. All sorts and conditions of men were likely to pester him from now on, Betty being doubly attractive. But this was out of the ordinary. Why not temporize, dig in, and find out what lay behind this weird encounter? "You might tell me something about yourself before we proceed," he suggested.

The young man was not so guileless as he seemed; he was, at present, merely the possessor of a whimsical idea. He sensed the irony, the mockery. Two little points of fire appeared in his eyes. Ordinarily Mansfield would have taken warning from the young man's ease and lack of diffidence;

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but his perceptions were dulled by his suppressed wrath and astonishment.

"I am called Brandon Cathewe. By profession I am a writer." He hesitated for a moment. "I have a little money."

"A writer—with a little money. I should say that that was quite fortunate."

The young man who called himself Brandon Cathewe laughed. "I readily understand. The oddity of my attack amuses you."

"Frankly it does. I am going to ask you a point-blank question. Is this a wager?"

"It is not," was the smileless answer.

"Unknown, then, either to myself or to my daughter, you approach me with the request to pay her court!" Wrath began to bubble again. "I should say, from the cut of your clothes, that you came from the steerage and are trespassing this deck. You are perfectly serious?"—with a vague hope that this appeal would lift a corner of the veil.

"Perfectly and honourably serious."

Suddenly there leaped into Mansfield's cold brain an idea, savage and ironic. Later he and Betty would have a hearty laugh over this idea. The impudent bounder!

"Brandon Cathewe," he mused. "That has an Irish lilt. So you wish to pay court to my daughter; object, matrimony."

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"With your permission."

Hours after it occurred to the irate millionaire that while the young scoundrel had been respectful, he had never employed the word "sir."

"Supposing you give me a moment or two—for breath?"

"I am an American, and I could find many ways—honourable—of approaching your daughter. I merely took that course which is customary."

"Customary?" repeated the ironmonger, becoming bewildered. In France it was customary; but this fellow was from the States, where such a procedure was anything but customary. Mansfield puffed rapidly; his perfecto was on the point of going out. When the wrapper began to curl again, his cold eye once more scrutinized this amazing young man. Hang it, the scoundrel's assurance was baffling. It was, in fact, the calm assurance of an equal. "It is needless to ask if you are in love with my daughter."

"Quite needless. I am."

"The result of one meeting; coming up the gangplank?"

"I have a happy faculty of knowing what I want."

"And of getting it?"—mockingly.

"Not always, to be sure, but generally. No doubt it sounds ridiculous to you; but the two times

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I have seen your daughter convince me that she is the one woman. Her beauty is the least of her."

An odd statement, thought Mansfield. "You have heard of the city of Bannister?"

"Very few people in America have not."

"Very good. I grant you permission to pay court to my daughter, conditionally. I'll waive my right to inquire about your family and your bank accounts. My terms are, go to Bannister and make good; then come to me. I will introduce you personally to my daughter, provided she is not already married by that time."

"On the word of a gentleman?"

"On the word of a gentleman." Mansfield smiled. As if it mattered! "Until you make good, you are not to seek in any manner to meet her. She is not to know that such a person as—er—Brandon Cathewe exists. On your honour as a gentleman."

"My word is given."

"Understand me. I don't mean just making some money. By making good I mean that you must become a force in Bannister. On the other hand, I am not going to keep my daughter locked up until you arrive. Those are the conditions," concluded Mansfield, very well pleased with himself.

"And I accept."

"You—what?"

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"Accept. But on your part you must agree to give me fair play."

"Fair play?" Why, the bounder did not see the joke! "What do you mean by fair play?"

"You will say nothing to your daughter of this interview. I have come to you frankly and honourably, and I ask you measure for measure. If my conduct—my approach—seems outlandish, bizarre, it is because I am not afraid to ask for something I desire. I love your daughter, crazy as the statement may seem. I'm no fool. Your first impulse was to throw me over the rail. Being a gentleman, you reconsidered. You would punish my impertinence by placing insurmountable obstacles in front of me. I have accepted these conditions. If I fail, you will never hear of me. Good morning!"

The young man seized the companion-ladder rails and swung himself to the main deck without touching the steps. Immediately he disappeared.

For a long time Mansfield stared at the space between the canvased railings of the companion-ladder, his forehead corrugated and his eyebrows askew. He was held by a species of hypnosis. Accepted the conditions, knowing why they had been offered! Unabashed, the fellow had accepted conditions which on the face of them were insurmountable! Mansfield shrugged away the spell

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and mentally stepped back to see if he could not get another angle to this remarkable encounter. A blind alley. That calm assurance. Mansfield knew the brand. It wasn't the cocksure conceit of youth; it was the assurance of a man who knew, first off, what he wanted. It was incredible.

He flung his cigar overboard impatiently. He became aware of another fact, not without its measure of chagrin. He would not be able to laugh with Betty. He would not dare tell her. The story, literally told, might seriously intrigue her, for she had not been brought up like the average American girl of wealth. Sophistication had not set a curb on her impulses. She was worldly, but she was real. Besides, she was romantic; and it would never do to let her interest become attracted by the beggar, who was handsome enough. A colossal joke like this, and he must remain silent! Setting a trap, he now found himself in one. But, pshaw! Why worry? She would never see or hear of this impertinent young jackanapes. The incident was closed. For no man succeeded in Bannister except by the express permission of the man who ruled it—Dunleigh Mansfield.

He strode away, rarely angry with himself for not having summoned a deck-steward at the start to send the fellow back where he belonged—the steerage. But did he belong in the steerage?

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Mansfield decided to consult the passenger list; and when he saw the fellow's name in that select directory, the fog became opaque. But all at once the riddle resolved itself into translatable terms. A socialist! A writer with a little money! A Knight of flapdoodle, an innocuous anarchist; the evanishment was complete.

That night at dinner he was astonished to find that Betty afforded him a new interest in life. She was desirable of men. One of them had boldly stated he wanted her—that handsome scallawag in the steerage. Until this hour the child had been his daughter, nothing more. Now she was something somebody wanted. She had a value of her own. Somebody wanted her; and her father had never really wanted her. True, she had had for him the quality of an exquisite toy; but nothing beyond that. Was he now going to want her because somebody else did?

At the death of her mother—fourteen years before—Mansfield had sent Betty to France. She had been entrusted to the care of an aristocratic but impoverished French family (liberally supplied with funds from the Mansfield strong-box) because he had not known exactly what to do with a child. If he kept her in America he would be compelled to neglect her. His vast business interests and his wide political affiliations required

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all his time. He was like the eagle: he preferred to fly alone, unhampered. This decision was due less to callousness than to a lack of paternal instinct. It was, however, wholly selfish as an inspiration. Betty would be in most excellent hands and he would be free.

The affair had turned out very well in some ways. The French family had educated her as one of their own. Thus she had escaped contact with that European froth known as Society. Mansfield had instinctively laid down one law: she was never to be permitted to forget that she was an American, that her native tongue was English; and this law was religiously observed. So, at this day, Betty was an American girl whose speech was full of quaint and charming twists and accents. Her education had been finished in Milan; and she sang exquisitely.

Every other summer Mansfield had gone abroad and given her grudgingly two weeks of his precious time. It had been rather a bore. Once he had brought her home for the summer. She was now making her second trip. In a year or so she would be returning for good; but she would be old enough then to take care of herself; rule over his three houses and grace his table. She would be only a bit of backwater at the side of the stream.

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And now, somebody wanted her. What was it that young crack-brain had said? "Her beauty is the least of her." He stared at his daughter's profile to see if he, too, could discover what there was to her beyond her undeniable beauty. He became unaccountably thrilled by the vanity of possession. The greatest pleasure in life for him was to possess something somebody else wanted.

While he invariably dressed with the taste and the exactitude of a dandy, he cared little for society. He became interested in a woman only when he found she was useful. Society was too tame an affair. All his dreams and efforts had been directed toward one end—power. He had never really loved anything. His wife had been merely an ornament. A hard man, with the brilliancy of a diamond, not particularly scrupulous when there was an objective in view.

The more he stared at his daughter, the more convinced he was that she was quite the most beautiful young woman he had ever seen, surpassing even her mother. She was unspoiled, too. Her charm emanated from within; it was innate, not the result of education and association. He had recognized this fact subconsciously some days before; now it was clear. And she had a new value: somebody wanted her.

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"Daddy, if you scowl at me like that. . . ."

"Was I scowling? I was thinking. Betty, you are very beautiful," he added.

"Just discover it?"—a little wistfully.

"No. I believe it has been sinking in for some time. Betty, on the day of your marriage I'm going to tell you a wonderful joke."

"Why can't you tell me now?"

"On the day you are married."

"You are laughing at me!"

"No. I don't believe any one will ever laugh at you, Betty, not even your father."

"You embarrass me, Daddy," she said, gravely, "when you look at me like that."

"Haven't I just discovered you?"—lightly.

She thrilled. This handsome father of hers had always been to her a kind of wonderful god, to be admired and worshipped from afar, not to be touched. Now he was often taking her by the shoulders and staring into her face. A wild, fierce exultation filled her whenever he acted thus. Was he beginning to care a little? She recalled the formal meetings in the salon of the old château, the cold kiss on her forehead, the perfunctory questions about her studies. "Mademoiselle's father is waiting in the salon." How her heart had pounded and thundered whenever the maid announced this fact!

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"I am piqued," she said. "Is the joke so funny?"

"On your wedding day."

"But will it keep that long?"

"On that day it will be perfectly ripe. Betty, have you ever been in love?"

"Oh, yes!"—brightly.

"What?" Mansfield barked.

"With you!"—shyly.

Every morning from ten until twelve and every afternoon from two until five Cathewe stretched himself out on the sunny hatch and wrote. No one bothered him, though he was generally surrounded. There were frequent gaps in the continuity of his narrative. During these gaps he would stare at the rocking horizon without seeing it.

On the last day out of port he could not work at all, that is, with results. Bannister. He would have to throw up his lucrative editorial work in New York and seek out that inland town. There wasn't a soul there he knew. And what manner of job would there be in Bannister for him?—what stepping-stone to power? Tom Fool! For he was going to see this affair through. He smiled ruefully. Always the same; there did not seem to be the least hope. Nothing would ever cure him

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of the habit of taking the plunge without first ascertaining whether the water was deep or shallow. All any one had to do was to dare him. Where the dickens was this adventure going to lead him?

Of course Mansfield viewed the affair in the light of a huge joke. Apparently no human being might climb over the wall with which he had surrounded his daughter. But unknown to Dunleigh Mansfield, there was a postern gate to this wall. Through this love would find a way.

A writer—with a little money! He laughed aloud, ironically; and some of the children standing by eyed him owlishly. Could he honourably offer love to any woman—a man with three names?

Now then, every afternoon, around about three, Betty came down the companion-ladder to the waist. Her father always stood at the crossrail on guard, a tolerant expression on his handsome face. If she wanted to feed goodies to these wild little pigs, she was at liberty to do so. She had rather curious ideas, and later he would undertake to curb them. Invariably she carried a package of cakes and fruit and nuts which she distributed among the children of the steerage. At first they had been shy and suspicious—as you and I would have been had an angel appeared before us with manna. But now they swarmed about her with

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that trust and joyousness which are peculiar to children and puppies.

I doubt if she ever noticed the young man on the hatch. Perhaps it was because his clothes were of the same nondescript pattern as that of the other steerage passengers. Let us strike the bell at once. Women—especially young women—rarely look pointblank into a man's face until after they have covertly inspected his clothes. This precautionary measure is not necessarily due to snobbishness; it is more or less instinctive. As you know, they must always be on the watch.

To-day, as she was returning to the ladder, she dropped something. Instantly the young man sprang up and across the deck. He snatched the filmy bit of lace and cambric just as the wind threatened to carry it under the scupper.

"Your handkerchief, miss," he said.

"Thank you."

If the face she saw registered itself upon her memory, it would be due to the beautifully modelled head. She continued on toward the ladder, mounted, serenely unconscious of the fact that she had left standing by the rail a man who was one day to make her heart ache dreadfully, who was to hold her in the strangest thrall that ever fell to the lot of a young woman.

Cathewe smiled up at Mansfield, who returned

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the smile. But there was something totally different in the quality of those two smiles. One was boyish and whimsical; the other was sardonic. For one knew life in theory and the other knew it in fact.

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CHAPTER II

ACROSS the shining threads of steel—the railway yard—a man ran lightly, with the sure foot of the athlete. He wore a blue checkered Mackinaw and a woollen cap pulled down over his ears. Behind lay a sinister outline: chimneys spouting fire and black smoke, giant furnace doors opening and closing, blinding rivulets of molten metal. Men, with the aspect of demons, flitted past these luminous backgrounds. Beyond the runner stood rows of forlorn tenements, frame houses, shacks, evidently his objective. Farther on were the angry waters of a great lake, baffled by the huge ice-floes which the extreme cold had locked and riveted anew. For it was zero weather, despite the fact that there was little snow visible. The fierce, high winds generally whipped the snow inland, to the hills south of the city.

It was the drab end of a day made doubly drab by environment.

The runner, nicely measuring the distance between the rails, never faltered. He was in a hurry. At any moment a mile-long freight might cut him off. When at length he leaped across the last

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rail, under the very nose of a disgruntled switch-engine with a string of empties rattling behind, the runner was fairly well spent.

At the curb—to be precise, the ditch—in front of one of the tenements, before which ran a crumbling tar walk, stood a two-seated runabout, rusty and battered, but as faithful as a mongrel dog. Of its kind it was a mongrel. It was seven or eight years old if a day. It had been added to at various periods, for safety and convenience, until there wasn't a toe-hold on either of the running boards, for the batteries, tanks, and tool-boxes that cluttered them.

In passing I might say that in the city of Bannister this ramshackle vehicle was as familiar to the sight as the police-van and the fire-engines. You were quite as likely to see it reposing impudently before some handsome mansion on Polygon Hill as here in Poverty Row, where, in truth, it seemed more at home.

The man in the Mackinaw paused for a moment to eye this car. Though he was panting heavily, a smile parted his lips—a tender smile. The chariot of Elijah. God bless his beautiful, kindly old heart!

He pushed his way into the hall of the tenement and climbed four gloomy and smelly flights of stairs. He came to a door, but he did not bother to knock. He opened it and stepped inside.

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It was a forlorn room. Whichever way you looked you saw squares and triangles of lath from which the plaster had fallen. In a window a newspaper served as a pane of glass. The surviving panes were dim with soot and cobwebs. At the side of a dilapidated iron bed sat a man in a fur-lined overcoat, the collar up about his ears. He wore a coonskin cap. On the floor beside his chair was a long black satchel, more familiar to women and children than to men. He was Doctor Maddox, hale and hearty at sixty, white of hair and ruddy countenance, loved by dogs and children and men and women. But there were some in Bannister who feared him, for he was a ruthless enemy of dirt and disease and inefficiency.

On the bed, under a tattered sheet, there was a body, sinisterly rigid in outline. I wonder if God ever looks down upon any picture more forlorn that death in poverty?

"Dead?"

"Yes, son. He was dead when I got back from telephoning you."

"I was just starting out for a tramp. I came as fast as I could. How did it happen?"

"He was old and slow and got in the way of a swinging crane. There wasn't a whole bone in his body. The men brought him here on an im-

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provised stretcher. I was attending another case in the block."

"Could he talk?"

"He mumbled something about the seventh plank from the west wall, naming you. What's your interest in him? He wasn't a Bannister man."

"Human." The young man walked over to the west wall, counted off six planks in the floor, and pried back the seventh. From the cavity he extracted a bundle of papers. "Doctor, do you know what has doubled Mansfield's fortune since the war began?"

"What?"

"Those barbwire machines. The man on the bed there was the inventor. These papers are the documents in the case. Is there nothing sinister in the fact that he lies there dead? Why should he be doing manual labour at three dollars the day, working at a kind of charity job, when he should have had all the comforts of life? Think of him dying in bitterness like that! Eighteen dollars the week, with the music of his own creation in his ears, day after day, and another man taking all the profits!"

"You mean he was cheated and robbed?"

"Legally, no; morally, yes."

The young man in the Mackinaw went over to

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the window, rubbed a little clearing, and stared at the great drab buildings on the far side of the railway yard. He was smooth-shaven, anywhere between twenty-five and thirty-five: one of those fortunate individuals upon whom age leaves no grinding impression. A fine face, gentle and scholarly; but scrutiny brought forth salients which would have baffled the physiognomist temporarily. It was as if one gazed at a composite of faces. The face was clearly—even beautifully—defined until you began to study it; then, somehow, it escaped you. One moment you would call it proud and hawky; in the next, whimsical and lovable.

The doctor, no mean physiognomist, had studied the face of his friend for nearly three years, and still he could not put a positive label on it. Their paths had crossed and recrossed, socially and professionally, a thousand times; but in this hour the doctor was confronted with the fact that this young man was still a stranger. What he knew of Brandon Cathewe had not been acquired from deductive sources; he had gathered his information, such as it was, from the young man's acts. He had seen him tender and pitiful; resolute and indomitable; he had seen him happy-go-lucky, a light heart; and he had seen him ruthless and terrible, but just. There was something elemental, primordial, in the way this handsome boy—his

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years did not matter—fitted into conditions. And always and eternally on the side of the weak and the oppressed. Sometimes the doctor felt that he was chatting with a man who still believed in fairies.

"Son, have you anything personally against Dunleigh Mansfield?"

"I hadn't when I came here to take charge of the *Herald*. I came to Bannister upon an almost unbelievable adventure. Some day I may tell you about that. Often—when I have time to think of it—I'm convinced that I am the most colossal fool alive. When a man finds his foot in the bog, what does he do? Yank it out. As for me, I put in both feet to see how deep it is"—bitterly. "No; at the start I had nothing against Mansfield. But for three years I've done nothing but stumble over cases like this: mean and contemptible. Cold-blooded, but always within the law. What's the object in piling up more gold? He can't count his millions. He doesn't need money, and yet he robs a man like this. Look at the gin-holes he draws revenue from, under the shelter of another man's name! Is it for the sport of the thing? The whole town is under his thumb politically. The elections are farces. What's his idea?"

"Perhaps his underlings——" began the doctor.

"No, no. He alone is responsible. No mat-

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ter where he is, he knows what is going on here. It was only by a miracle that we pried loose his grip on the Health Department."

"And yet he gives a great deal to charity."

"Ah, charity! His distinguished name at the top of the column. Trust him for that. There is no feel in charity that does not entail some sacrifice. What's a million to him? He doesn't feel it any more than you do when you pass out two coppers for my newspaper. Charity! He gives to hospitals because they are officered by the prominent society women of the town. He builds libraries where the poor are afraid to go. A playground where the children can't play on the grass. When we started to clean up the Health Department, he gave himself away with his hullabaloo. He knew that if we got our man in, we'd soon clean up these typhoid pits. Do you know that he owns all these tenements and shacks as he owns the gin-holes—under the cloak of another man's name? He gets his perfumed liquors and aromatic tobaccos out of these rat-traps."

"And the queer part is, he's a gentleman, born and bred." The doctor wagged his head, gravely.

"And there it is. Had he come up from the gutter, one could understand. But he is, as you say, a gentleman. He should be great, whereas he is only sordid."

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"No; I shouldn't call him sordid. A blind spot. I knew him, son, as a youth. There was none better, but he began to change when he took hold of the mills. There's good in him, if one could find the way to it."

"I'm going to make a try," replied Cathewe, grimly, "beginning to-morrow."

"What are you going to do—print this story?" asked the doctor, indicating the poor broken thing on the bed.

"Yes. I've known all along what kind of a man he was. But I dared not attack him until I'd made the paper a go. Now I can start the guns."

"You're a queer duck."

"Because I want to help the under dog? Aren't you always helping him yourself? How am I queer?"

"Because you haven't got your balance yet, son. The way to do is to go along without letting your hackles rear up every time you scent a wrong. Cure the wrong, if you can. Don't go smashing through the barbwire when there's another way around. I was once like you; but I am old and wise; and I accomplish much more these days by going the other way around. You're doing a lot of good in this town. Don't spoil it. Once Mansfield recognizes in you a dangerous enemy, he will

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snuff you. That's why I don't want you to play your hand too strongly."

"Snuff me? I pick up that gauntlet," was the truculent retort. "Before I'm through I promise to render Mansfield impotent for future harm. I have facts, facts. My audience has learned to trust me; and they'll believe the *Herald*. I am going to protect these poor human beings who don't know how to fight for their rights. I mean the honorable poor. I've no use for socialism or any of that flapdoodle. I realize that the only way to right the world is to right the individual first."

"He will break you."

"My soul is like cork, Doctor. There's nothing brittle about cork. You know a little about me. Have you ever known me to step back?"

"No. But what can you do against his tremendous power, which reaches from here to Washington?"

"I can speak the truth and back it up with incontrovertible facts."

Doctor Maddox sighed. "Let us be off. The coroner must be notified. I'll take you into town. You are going to print this?"

"I am."

"Mention Mansfield?"

"I am. No editorial comment; just the bald

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news facts. I'll refer to him as the Lord of Polygon Hill."

"Son, they will have your hide on the fence."

"They'll find it pretty tough for nails. Too long have the folks hereabouts feared Mansfield. His power and his money have cowed them. But I'm not afraid of money or prestige."

"Have you ever come into contact with them?"

"Yes." But he said it sadly.

The two passed down into the street, where the younger cranked up the runabout. It was a faithful old trap. The engine began to clitter-clutter at once. Cathewe sprang in beside the doctor, and the car lurched forward over the frozen, corrugated road. They were well upon the asphalt of the city when the young man spoke.

"I can't quite understand why you defend Mansfield."

"I'm not defending him. I am only suggesting that there is good in him. And you are going to pound your way to it. No, boy; the harder you pound Mansfield, the harder he gets. But go to it. The town is dull, and a little excitement won't hurt it. So you've waited to get an audience before you began your campaign? That was shrewd. The other editors couldn't wait; and where are they? But keep your eye open for libellous slips. Be absolutely sure of your facts."

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"Don't worry about that."

"Mansfield has a daughter who believes him to be a demigod—as mine believes me to be."

"Ah, but you are one. Nancy has a right to believe that. But Mansfield's daughter! What is she but an inconsequent butterfly? The war drove her back to this country; she let it. She deserted her foster mother in an hour like that! She did not even return here, where she might have done some good. She went to New York, to Washington, to dance and to play."

"She is young. In judging her you may be a little hasty. Nancy, who is visiting her in Washington, says she is tender and lovely and lovable."

"I was wondering what had become of Nancy. Miss Mansfield will improve. You can't help it, and be with Nancy Maddox."

"A good girl."

"She's splendid!"—with enthusiasm.

The doctor's eyes sparkled. If only this odd, clean boy and Nancy might fall in love with each other!

"They are beginning to renovate the house," he said.

"Mansfield's?"

"Nancy writes that they expect to return and settle down permanently in the early fall. And then we shall see. Betty has a beautiful soul, son;

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only, she isn't quite awake yet. She is not dancing entirely, down there in Washington. Wait until you see her. The marvel to me is that she is still unmarried. The young men in Washington have gone off their heads over her. She has all the qualities in one—like the mother who bore her—beauty, goodness, and money."

"Oh, well, if you say so. Doctor, I want to ask you a question. Am I anything like a force in this town?"

"There isn't a working man in the county who does not trust you. There isn't a politician in the city hall who does not fear you. That's why I don't want you to break your head against Mansfield."

"I'm kind o' set in my ways. You're a fighting man yourself. Would you quit in my place?"

"Probably not. I'm only trying to keep you where you'll do the most good. The moment you appear formidable to Mansfield, watch out."

"Won't you stop in for tea?"

"Spoil my supper. And your mother would make me forget that there was such a thing as a wife and supper waiting for me."

Cathewe laughed. "She is a wonder, isn't she!"

"Cathewe, I can't get it out of my noddle, but both you and your mother seem out of place in that modest little home with the picket fence."

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"What gives you that idea?" asked Cathewe, with a searching glance.

"I enter all houses, and my mind is formed. I should say that you paid about six thousand for the little house."

"About that."

"And the contents are as rare and beautiful as anything on Polygon Hill. Not a chair without a history. But that isn't it. You two move about as though—what shall I say?—as though you had always been accustomed to such surroundings. And neither of you goes out socially. Off the concert stage I never heard the equal of your mother at the piano. Understand me, son. I'm not poking around. I'm only telling you that you mystify us simple folks in Bannister. Now many shares do you own of the *Herald?*"

"Forty-nine per cent."

"Why not fifty-one—the control?"

"We can't locate fifty shares. They have completely vanished in some manner. Transfer records gone, too. So long as they don't turn up, I'm in control."

"The paper is paying dividends, I hear."

"Small, but satisfactory."

"A good joke on the *Times* and the *Telegram*. They laughed at you for taking hold of that mildewed, moribund sheet. You're clever."

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"Business. I inherited that talent." This was spoken sharply, as if there was something distasteful in the confession. "And I'm something of a sport, too. The greatest gamble in the world is the newspaper game."

"How'd you happen to hit Bannister?"

"When you play poker, you never know what's in the draw. A newspaper friend told me that the *Herald* was on the market for the price of the presses. And here I am—to stay."

"Ah! That depends."

Cathewe laughed. "If I didn't know you, I'd say you, too, were afraid of the man."

"No. Merely I know him. I've taken a fancy to you and don't want to see you ruined. But you came here with a double purpose?"

"Yes. As an honest man and a Tomfool. But more of that some other day. Doctor, what would you say if I told you I was a man with three names?"

"What?—three names?"

"Yes. My own and two others."

"What's the joke, son?"

For a block Cathewe remained silent. "After all, a doctor is like a priest—the repository of secrets. One more won't hurt you. I am going to talk to you as the family physician."

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"You mean that you do not want me to repeat what you are about to tell me?"

"Yes."

"It is nothing I ought not to know?"

"I am not a fugitive from justice."

"I beg your pardon, son!"

"But I'm a kind of Ishmael. I am pursued by the Furies. I am in the same category as a ship beset by a typhoon—a victim. Three names. I have an assumed one. By that name I make a modest living, honourably. Brandon Cathewe are my given names, the tail of the kite, which is Hallowell. Have you ever by chance heard of Digby Hallowell?"

The doctor repeated the name ruminatingly. "Seems I've heard the name somewhere, but it escapes me at this moment."

"You will recall it with a little digging," said the young man with gentle irony. "And when you do, remember I'm Digby Hallowell's son and my mother is his widow. Here we are. Thanks for the lift. When you pick the *Herald* off your door step to-morrow morning, you'll see some interesting facts relative to Dunleigh Mansfield and his way of doing business. The Lord of Polygon Hill. That will make a good catch-phrase."

Cathewe jumped down from the car and with astonishing ease vaulted the gate. He turned,

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waved his hand, and ran up the brick path to the door.

The doctor turned the car to his own driveway which was diagonally across the street. Digby Hallowell. He tried to wake up certain memory cells, but without success. Three names. All along the boy had mystified him. A fine linguist, and for his age, a remarkable scholar. That would be a European education. He had made the *Herald* the most popular newspaper in town, but he himself was almost unknown, having stayed resolutely in the background. And all the time waiting for the psychological moment to arrive when he might engage his lance against Mansfield's! The boy would be ground to powder. It would not matter that right was on his side; might was on the side of Mansfield. The boy would lose eventually all he had in the world. An old score to settle against Mansfield? He wondered if that was at the bottom of it all. It would be David with his sling against a dozen Goliaths armed with machine-guns. Not the least chance in the world. But he would go on, this boy, because he was the kind who had to go on. The prospect of defeat would not daunt him. It was a pity.

Digby Hallowell. Where had he heard that name? Certainly he had heard it. Digby Hal-

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lowell. It was not until after eight, when office hours were over, and he was seated by the reading lamp in the library, that the memory cell opened unexpectedly. Thunder-struck, he lowered his pipe. The son of *that* man! The pity and tragedy of it! Now he understood many baffling things. He understood why that beautiful white-haired woman seldom smiled save when her boy was the object of her gaze. Digby Hallowell's son! Ishmael indeed!

People in Bannister talked a good deal about Dunleigh Mansfield, discussed him and his method frankly enough; but the newspapers fought shy of any spectacular tale. Mansfield had a habit of presenting editors with tickets of transportation when he found he did not like them. So, on the morrow, when subscribers picked up the *Herald* off their front steps, they sensed a shock, at once pleasurable and sorrowful. By noon the whole city was aware of the fact that Mansfield had been boldly and skilfully assailed in his castle-keep.

Between the counsel for the Mansfield interests in Bannister and Mansfield himself there were exchanged a series of brief telegrams. An excerpt of the story had been telegraphed to Washington.

From Washington: "Is it blackmail? Give the editor a scare."

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From Bannister: "No blackmail. He won't scare. Have seen his proofs. We can't do anything through courts."

From Washington: "Buy the sheet."

From Bannister: "Editor says it is not for sale."

From Washington: "What is editor's name?"

When Mansfield received the answer to this query, he was in his study. He was in evening dress, waiting for his daughter and her guest, Miss Nancy Maddox, to come down. They were going out to dinner and later to a dance. Impatiently Mansfield ripped open the yellow envelope and drew out—Medusa's head! Anyhow, he stared at the sheet, motionless and stonily, in a kind of petrified astonishment. He had all but forgotten the man and the incident.

"Brandon Cathewe!"

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CHAPTER III

THAT fellow, that impertinent beggar who had taken a joke in earnest! Gone to Bannister and bought a newspaper! But why was he turning his cannon upon Dunleigh Mansfield? If he wanted Betty, why attack the father in this manner? The infernal blackguard! Mansfield picked up a cigarette. It would spoil his dinner, but the sudden craving for tobacco would not be denied. Of course he had purchased the invention outright, at an absurd figure. That was merely good business. If the inventor hadn't the brains and foresight to guard himself, that was none of Dunleigh Mansfield's affair. After a certain number of years, if the production reached a certain height, the inventor was to receive royalty. If a "certain height" had signified a computation beyond the possibilities of production, why hadn't the inventor looked into the facts and registered a protest? A perfectly legal business deal; the moral side of it was negligible. It just happened to be one of those newspaper sensations for which the American public clamoured. Spite, probably. The young fool had suddenly realized that Betty was as far

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out of his reach as the stars, and had now embarked upon a campaign of spite.

But for all that, the madman had gone to Bannister; and madmen who accomplished things were dangerous. Of all the insane projects! But there occurred to Mansfield that there was a sinister phase to the affair. The young anarchist must be suppressed before he made any headway. He must find out how long the fool had been in Bannister and what success he was making of the sheet. Actually gone to Bannister to become a force!

Very good. Mansfield knew all about editors and newspapers. He had eliminated more than one editor from the affairs of Bannister. Another was now due to follow his predecessors. An anarchist; and sooner or later he would be meddling with the men in the shops—if let be.

Betty, however, must know nothing; the scurrilous sheet must not fall into her hands. It was perfectly legitimate business; but the young woman had odd ideas in her head. She was sometimes painfully clear and direct.

Soon she would be returning to Bannister. He did not want her to go back there at all, but there was apparently no visible method by which he would dissuade her. But why didn't he want her to go back? That puzzled him. He had tried to analyze this objection, but it eluded him perpetually.

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Was it because the child had ceased to be a stranger? Was it because her point of view was subtly undermining his? Of what was he afraid? That in returning to Bannister she might eventually learn that her father was not quite the demigod she pictured him?

Well, he would have that Cathewe chap out of the way before she did return. His only concern was that she might stumble upon something in type. Very few in Bannister would dare whisper even that Dunleigh Mansfield was not always scrupulous.

Concern. He began to turn the word over and over in his mind. Was it concern? Was it not something akin to fear? The child actually loved him, though he had never melted beyond the perfunctory kiss and embrace; and his fear or concern, or whatever it was, was for her rather than for himself. He did not want her to learn that business and politics were ruthless adventures.

He was really fond of her. There was no doubt in his mind regarding this fact. He had also grown accustomed to her. She was always amiable and witty; and he was just beginning to find amazing pleasure in the sound of her singing voice. Hitherto music had left him untouched emotionally; now he at least found it soothing.

There was no love in his heart for her; the instinct was merely that of possession. That fell in

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accord with his ruling passion—to possess that which the other man had not, or if he did possess it to dispossess him. His daughter was a lovely and companionable ornament. Years ago he had written in granite that love and business should not be mixed, that it was impossible to mix them, that it must be one or the other. He knew that he did not love her. He never worried about her when she went out alone as she often did. There was never any thrill when she returned. He was always glad to see her; this much was an established fact. She had become a part of his daily routine. He recognized that he did not want to love her. Such a condition of mind would become a disintegrating force in relation to the tremendous plans he was forming against the future—when this silly war was done with. One could not be ruthless and love anything.

Long ago Mansfield had lost the art of introspection. Self-analysis was a waste of time. And he seldom inclined toward retrospection. The past was like a series of shut doors. He rarely if ever turned back to open one; or, if one was opened somebody else opened it: as for instance, this impertinent young anarchist who had just pilloried Mansfield's business methods in such a manner as to leave the object of the onslaught without a counter-attack in the courts.

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After all, there was something startling in the event. Of all the insane projects! The fellow had actually taken him at his word and gone to Bannister to make good. There existed, then, a human being who could embark upon such an enterprise, who could accept conditions which would have wrinkled the brow of the young Hercules? Mansfield recalled what he could of that remarkable interview. Why, the fellow had caught the spirit of the jest, but had pinned the jester down to a gentleman's agreement. A Don Quixote in a cotton shirt! Gone to Bannister, bought that semi-socialistic sheet, all with the idea of winning Betty! The fellow ought to be looked over by the commission in lunacy.

Very well. Shortly the editor would sell his newspaper; if he refused to sell, he would be driven into bankruptcy. One did not have to dynamite a newspaper to get rid of it; you took away its advertising. In one manner or another, he should be driven out of Bannister, where he did not belong. There was no fear in Mansfield's heart. His prerogatives had been encroached upon, and the encroacher must be punished, as an example and a warning to other editors that one man ruled the destinies of Bannister.

When his daughter and her friend came down, Mansfield had himself in hand. His handsome

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face was expressive of pleasure and amiability and gave no hint of the cold plans of annihilation that were forming in his head.

"I don't know which of you two affords me the most pleasure—the orchid or the rose," he said. "I expect to be very much envied to-night."

"Which of us is which?" asked Betty.

"I'm the country rose," said Nancy, readily.

"Then I am to consider myself an orchid?"

"The white orchid of Borneo," said her father, gallantly.

"Daddy, that was very nice. Ready?"

"Yes. I shall have to leave you two after dinner. I am expecting to wind up a munitions contract. You are not afraid to come home alone, Betty?"

Betty laughed. "I adore these adventures where I have to depend upon myself. Think of the thrill of saying—'Home, James!'—on a dark night!"

"Honestly, I don't believe you are afraid of anything, Betty," declared Mansfield, pleased.

"Why should I be?"

"The dark," said Nancy, "has no terrors for either of us. It all depends upon what you read."

"And what do you read?" asked Mansfield, who was really a fine scholar.

"Good books, books about human beings who

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are striving to better themselves. I like that 'Prosaic Lives.' The author wrote from his heart."

Mansfield picked up the book from the table. "A green young man. It is quite patent that he wrote from his heart, not from a brain that had gathered the facts first-hand and sifted false ideals from the true. A good book, a worth-while book, must be the result of a nicely balanced brain and heart. If you let the heart dictate, you generally invite trouble. It is as if a soldier were giving orders to his general. A well-written book, but green."

"It was very popular," Nancy defended.

"And there are some lines that are beautiful," added Betty. "They are like little children. You want to cuddle them."

"Oh, he has promise. But his fault is patent. He strives for realism, and an inherent romanticism is always cropping forth. Some day he will look back upon this book with chagrin. Well, suppose we start?"

"But what an odd name to assume!" Betty balanced the book on her palm.

"George Cottar; Kipling's Brushwood Boy. And there you are," declared her father. "A dreamer, not a doer; a dweller in a fairyland of his own making, observing life through roseate clouds!"

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"But what would we do in this world if there weren't any Brushwood Boys?" asked Nancy. "Don't we all make believe at one time or another? Do you mean to tell me that you've never built any dreams?"

"Oh, when I was a youngster, probably—the kind of dreams you mean. I have my dreams all right; but they come to me in the form of blueprints. And I have the advantage over your George Cottar, for my dreams come true."

"Didn't his?" said Betty, softly.

"But that's a story only. It happened in a book"; and Mansfield started for the hall.

He sat in the forward chair of the limousine. Occasionally he heard the girls laugh. Whenever they spoke to him, he replied in monosyllables. His thoughts were busy mulling over the Cathewe affair. A man, a grown man, to attempt a game like this!

Suddenly he had it; and the illumination chilled him slightly. Reprisal. The whole affair on shipboard a blind, Betty a pretence. The son of some man he had broken via the Wall Street method. The affair now had sense and significance. Reprisal. Very good. What he had meted out to the father he would mete out to the son.

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CHAPTER IV

WHEN the girls returned neither was in the mood for bed. So they went into the library and curled up on the davenport. The soft-coal fire, full of little flaming tongues of gas, was the only light. For awhile they did not speak. They were revolving that marvellous kaleidoscope called memory. They were building in the fire, as they say, castles and cottages, gardens and young romance.

I wish I had some new words; or that I could twist the old ones about in such a fashion as to make them look new. To have described these two young women a thousand years ago, when the language blocks were freshly painted! Both of them had beauty. The beauty of one was cloud-like: a summer cloud, brilliantly white against the blue, changing subtilely and continuously, mirrored on the stream—a serene beauty. Her lovely white arms were spread out on each side of her. Her skin, reflecting the firelight, was like a gold-beater's leaf; and there were magic threads of gold in the blue iris of her eye. Her hair was a ruddy brown, like the leaf of the copper-beech in October. The

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other girl was resting her elbows on her knees, her chin in the cup of her palms. She was as pretty as a hollyhock: homesy, frank, and friendly. Good foils, a summer cloud and a hollyhock.

There was no continuity to Nancy Maddox's thoughts. They were like butterflies, wheeling and turning in a most wonderful garden. These amazing two weeks! It seemed to her that she wasn't real, that in some mysterious fashion she had been incorporated between the covers of an English society novel. Ambassadors and diplomats, officers from all parts of the world, heroes and politicians! Men with brains to sell, guns, secrets. And they danced with Nancy Maddox because she was Betty Mansfield's friend.

Betty! How they flocked about her, these men! She was like a whirlpool, drawing everyone toward her, and quite as unconscious of her power as any real whirlpool. Nancy had learned a stupendous fact, that the great in soul are always simple and genuine. And this lovely girl at her side was totally free of artifice. Possibly this was one of her main attractions. To blasé Washington it was a novelty to come into contact with a mind that was as frank and kindly bent as it was brilliant. And yet, what was it? Always Betty seemed to be gazing over the heads of her admirers with the air of a watcher. That was it precisely: watching

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and waiting for something. The baffling eagerness with which she greeted strange young men, and then shortly the lack of interest in them! A riddle of some sort.

Boom-boom! said the ormulu clock on the mantel.

"Good gracious!" exclaimed the hollyhock; "two o'clock in the morning!"

"Sleepy, Nancy? Why, two o'clock in the morning here is only the shank of the evening."

"I guess I'm truly a country mouse. Anything after midnight scares me. What a gorgeous time you have given me! I wonder if you haven't spoiled me for Bannister? Dear old father will notice my airs and make fun of me."

"Nothing could spoil you, Nancy. Isn't it odd, though? I haven't seen you but three times in all these years and you are just the same as when we played in pinafores. Nancy, I just love you!" And Betty threw her arms around her friend. "And you love me?"

"With all my heart!" Nancy returned the embrace vigorously. "Aren't you tired?"

"Of all this? Of travel, of living in villas and hotels? Oh, I tired of that long ago, before the war forced me home. And I did so want to stay in France, which I love so. Unhappy France—to do something for her! But Daddy ordered me home."

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There was a long pause.

"Betty, you baffle me. Sometimes I think I know you; then I'm sure I don't."

"How—why?"

"For what are you watching and waiting?"

"Watching and waiting?"—startled. "Is it noticeable?"

"To me, Betty. You are so beautiful that I find myself watching you constantly. And I can't get away from the idea that you are watching and waiting for something or someone. The eager way in which you greet new men! I thought at first it was one of those little tricks women use to trap men's interest. But not you. I have noticed that after you've talked a little while with a new man you leave him utterly bewildered by your sudden lack of interest."

"And so you have noticed! I wonder if others have? Nancy, have you ever been in love?" —rather intensely.

"I don't know, Betty. There is a young man in Bannister I'm very fond of. I'm afraid I am fonder than it is wise to be, since no act or word of his has ever carried him over the boundary line of friendship. He's the queerest boy! Merry and whimsical and shrewd: but sometimes I sense precipices in his soul—depths that I cannot see into. Father says he is the finest young man he ever met,

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But there! I'm not in love that I know of. It may happen, but I'm not going to let go until he gives me the right to."

"Poor little country mouse! Do you believe love is something you can put snaffle and curb on? You are right, Nancy. I am watching. I don't suppose there's another woman in all this world so strangely and inexorably trapped as I am."

"Trapped? What do you mean?"

"Exactly what I say—trapped. Enmeshed in delicate cobweb, and yet I cannot break through." Betty stood up. She swept a hand across her eyes. "Oh, I must tell someone, or go mad! I dare not tell Daddy. Besides, he would not understand. He doesn't believe in Brushwood Boys." Betty suddenly dropped to her knees and seized the bewildered Nancy's hands. "Romance! Nancy, do I look like the kind—am I the kind—for any man to play with? I mean, is it right that any man should hurt and mock me when I have wittingly harmed no one? It isn't fair, it isn't fair! Love!—as if one could say howdy-do to it and then good-bye!"

"Betty, whatever has happened? I just knew that something was wrong. But there must be some mistake. No man would hurt and mock you intentionally."

Betty turned and sat on her heels, staring into

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the crumbling embers. She drew one of Nancy's hands down across her shoulder and held it tightly.

"Letters!—from the sky, the clouds, the stars, burning with fire. Oh, he must have loved me! He couldn't have written like that else. The first came in the fall of nineteen twelve, just after I had returned to Paris. It was beautifully written, full of poetry and music . . . and love. I read it and threw it into the empty grate. But I went back and recovered it. There was a phrase that kept singing through my head, and I wanted to see if I had interpreted it correctly. Well, I put the letter away. It wasn't as if I had never met young men. After I was eighteen the château doors were thrown open. It was my father's wish that I should be a little worldly—defensively. I shall inherit a vast fortune some day, aside from that which my mother left me; and it was a wise provision that I should know how to guard myself. So I wasn't an innocent, newly emerged from the nursery."

Nancy laid her free hand on the beautiful hair and stroked it.

"Of course I wondered who and what he was. I had nearly forgotten the letter—a month later—when the second one came, quite as wonderful as the first, which I resurrected for comparison. They were absolutely unlike except in theme.

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That was love. Father, as you know, was never with me to any extent. Somehow I could not go to the Countess—my foster mother—and ask her if it were proper for me to keep the letters. I did not want to keep them, and I just couldn't destroy them. You see, no answer was expected, for there was neither name nor address. A month later the third letter came. And then I began to wait for them, eager and thrilled. For nearly three years they came, Paris, Rome, London, Cairo, Florence, Washington, direct, there was never any forwarding marks upon the envelopes. Someone who knew where I was, where I was going. That alone fascinated me."

"From where were they mailed?"

"Always from New York. I have done silly things. I have even carried an autograph album about. Imagine it!—one of those old things our grandmothers used. All the young men who have danced or dined or had tea at this house or in New York have written their names in this album. But I never found the handwriting I was in search of."

"But it would be easy to disguise that."

"I made them write a paragraph with three or four sentences—quotations. It wasn't the writing; it was the style of punctuation by which they ended a sentence."

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"I don't understand."

"I was hunting for a curious period—a little x instead of a dot, such as you and I make. A man might change the style of his stroke, but habit would lure him into making that odd little period—so I believed."

"And you never found it?"

"No. There was always a postscript to these letters. *Some day I shall come to you.* Five months ago the letters ceased to come. What has happened? Is he dead? If alive, why doesn't he come to me?—when he knows where I am? A man so clever and resourceful, who always knows where I am going to be and when, ought not to have any difficulty in finding me. Nancy, I'm much afraid."

"Of what?"

"That he has created in my heart something that will always be there."

"Love?" whispered Nancy.

"I don't know what it is, but it is beginning to hurt dreadfully. Such beautiful letters: poetry, music, nature. How many times have I fashioned him in the grate there! Odd, that we cannot imagine a face and retain it in the memory. Imagine the lure of it! When I am in Florence, he tells me where to go: strange places the average tourist never hears about. It is the same when I am in

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Paris. It is almost as if he were walking beside me."

"He may be poor, Betty."

"Poor? A man who has travelled as he has?—who knows Florence better than the Florentine? No, Nancy. It costs money. But why did he write me in the first place, if he did not intend presenting himself some day? Nancy, I have carried these letters in passionate anger to this fire, determined to throw them into the flames. And what do I do? I sit down, read them, cry over them, and carry them back to the Florentine box I keep them in. At first, when I got a letter, it made me curiously happy. I'd sit down at the piano and sing happy songs. Now I can't sing anything but sad ones. What is happening to me? Whatever can it mean? I am afraid."

"He may be ill."

"He would have found some way of notifying me."

"He may have gone to war."

"He would have let me know."

"He might be too old and afraid to come."

"Oh, Nancy, he is young—like I am! I know it. But if I could only stamp out the thought of him, free myself. I *am* watching and waiting and searching. I am always straining my ears for some sign. He doesn't come. And now he writes no

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more. Where and under what circumstances did he first see me? Have I really met him? Do I know him? What impelled him to write like that to me? No man would make sport of me. My brain is in a turmoil. I would have disobeyed father and remained in France but for the hope that if I came home I might meet this strange and unusual man. Nancy, I am hurt."

"Burn the letters," said Nancy, indignantly. "It is going back to them that holds you. Burn them. Cut the Gorgon knot."

"I've tried . . . and I can't!"

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"Oh, Nancy . . . if I could only stamp out the thought of him . . ."

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CHAPTER V

ON THE sunny side of a huge boulder, on the top of a rusty green hill, sat a man with a small book on his knees. He wore a gray flannel shirt, tieless; a pair of brown corduroy trousers, much battered for wear; and a pair of ugly russet walking boots. For the present he was hatless, and his hair was tousled from constant plowing of his fingers.

From time to time his gaze would rove over the top of the book to the dancing waters of the great fresh-water sea, half a mile or more to the north. Behind him there was a fine country road. Occasionally an automobile flew past with a whining *zoum;* but the brisk northwest wind carried the dust to the south side of the highway. Eastward, above the brown and green and scarlet boscage, several church spires were visible in the late September haze. There lay the city of Bannister. Nature, hating the ugly, hid it as well as she could. Farther east, a drab smudge, which seemed to shut off the world beyond.

Whenever the man's gaze went back to his book, his expression was one of contentment. When-

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ever this gaze shifted toward the spires, an ironical smile twisted up the corners of his lips. It was when he looked at the water and the sky that an observer might have caught the vague glimpse of a poet's soul. To be a poet one does not have to write verse; it is necessary only to love the beautiful.

"Clouds!" he said aloud, in a kind of ecstasy. The book slipped from his knees.

Fairy castles and witches' caverns and Ali Baba's caves: rolling billows of white with ice-blue shadows and patches of intense blue; clouds, with the zenith and the dancing sapphire waters for a frame.

He frowned, for the smudge in the east again came into his range of vision. They were after him down there. Nearly all the local advertising had fallen away, and the stockholders were exhibiting signs of restiveness; and that signified that Mansfield or his agents had approached them. Still, he had their solemn promises that neither Mansfield nor his accredited agents would lay a finger on the stock, that under no provocation would they sell to the Lord of Polygon Hill. Cathewe knew that he could have settled the matter by a stroke of the pen. What made him dodder and risk betrayal? There was no logical reason at all why he shouldn't buy out the dis-

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gruntled stockholders and make his grip on the *Herald* absolute and permanent. There was something quicksilvery about this hesitance to act as he knew he ought to act, for he could not grasp it.

Had his diatribes and the success of the *Herald* brought Mansfield home, he wondered. Power. What an instrument to play on, this shifting, volatile thing called the public! People in Bannister who had to work had finally accepted the *Herald* as their pilot, whether the subject was war, politics, or religion. Power, a strong arm and a shield for the weak; to have sought the bird of paradise, and to have found the eagle.

His thought went to his mother. What a thoroughbred she was, to stick to him on his crazy adventure, to follow his fortunes, when she might have remained in the peace and seclusion of the villa up Fiesole way, with that riot of roses in the spring-time and the sun on the red roofs of Florence!

Cathewe, her maiden name; and to be forced to prefix it with Mrs. in order to share his fortunes! And always just a little worried for fear that someone from the old world she had known might cross her path and recognize her. It would have been better for them both had she remained in Italy, to have let him work out his amazing destiny alone. But what would he have done without her?

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When he was tired, discouraged, and heart-achy, to go home to her and sit in the twilight while she soothed him with that marvellous art of hers—his mother and his comrade. And the joy of sitting beside her on the piano bench, an arm around her, while she improvised and talked at the same time. God bless her! And it was inevitable that some day he would have to leave her. For he recognized the trend of events. America could not stay out of this war much longer.

The thousand doors of fate, as the ancient Chinaman had said. A thousand open doors, and he had entered this one, to find himself. That was the amazing part of it. A chance shot in the dark —and here was the chosen highway; obstacled, yes, but now clearly defined. No more blind alleys leading nowhere, no more doddering and doubting. And all because a woman's face had filled him with flame. That beautiful face, then, had been merely a sign-post to direct him on his way. He had gone aboard that ship, his head full of wondrous plans for the future—and here he was, in Bannister.

Human beings could get over most things—even love—and he knew that his sense of chagrin was slowly but surely effecting a cure. The face of an angel and the soul of a butterfly. There was no niche for a butterfly in his plan of life, a gilded,

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inconsequent butterfly. The world was on fire—and she could dance!

What possessed a man, he wondered, to fall in love with a picture? For that was what he had done. A picture, inexpressibly lovely, but still a picture. Twice, during the past two weeks, he had seen her in her limousine, her face in the cool shade of an old-fashioned Leghorn hat. There was a quaintness in her air that reminded him of Botticelli. And she was shallow.

Three or four times he had been on the point of quizzing Nancy; but Nancy was so shrewd that he was afraid lest she suspect the character of his interest.

Nancy. Why couldn't he fall in love with Nancy, pretty and wholesome and homesy, with her broad, sensible outlook, her kindness and tenderness, her deep sympathy for his cause? What fun it was, dropping in there for tea and chattering about books. The only home, save his own, he ever entered. Why had the butterfly crossed his path before he had seen the bee? That was one of life's ironies.

But was he getting over it? Was the cure really in process? If so, why had he gone up to Polygon Hill the other night, in the rain, to stand on the sidewalk with the hoi-polloi, while the élite of Bannister emerged from their limousines and

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taxis to pass under a canvas canopy fully three hundred feet long? What freakish curiosity had impelled him to wait there like a yokel, for nothing? There had been no earthly hope of seeing the butterfly in whose honour this affair had been arranged. Vaguely he had sensed the urge of one of those wild, spectacular plunges of his: to walk in, uninvited and as welcome as the plague, and demand of Mansfield that he carry out his end of the absurd agreement, since Brandon Cathewe had become a force in the city of Bannister. Had he not already fashioned a flaming sword?—and wasn't he striking sound and rugged blows against the predatory in the interests of the weak? And as evidence, wasn't Dunleigh Mansfield throwing the full weight of his power against the *Herald?* To have walked into that magnificent hallway, in his rain-sodden clothes, and demanded an introduction to Betty Mansfield!

The vast humour of such an exploit—his perfect sense of the dénouement—had doubtless saved him from committing it. He had burst forth into a gale of sardonic laughter, much to the astonishment of the hoi-polloi who had peered at him suspiciously from under teetering umbrellas.

There came an interruption—the whine of an automobile. A plague on them: a man had to climb the Matterhorn these days to find solitude.

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"Sandy!" cried a woman's voice from the far side of the boulder. "Sandy, come here! . . . Sandy!"

The automobile whizzed by. Cathewe recovered his book and stood up resentfully. But this resentment died swiftly.

On the slope just beyond the ditch—where he had been flung—lay an Airedale, motionless. Kneeling beside him was Betty Mansfield, her hands clenched against her bosom, her eyes full of unshed tears.

"My dog!. . . . My friend and comrade!"

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CHAPTER VI

CATHEWE dropped his book, ran across, looked at the dog for a moment or two, then picked him up tenderly and carried him back to the sunny side of the boulder, where there was a patch of warm clover. The girl followed, dumbly. Not a word was spoken until Cathewe put his hand over the dog's heart.

"Is—is he dead?" she whispered.

"No." His hands roved hither and yon over the dog's body. "We'll wait a minute. I can't find any breaks. Probably stunned."

"My poor Sandy!"

A moment later Cathewe received a slight but pleasurable shock. He had reached for the dog's head the same instant as she, and their hands touched. A great bitterness swept over him; for the aftermath of that pleasurable shock was the knowledge that he still cared.

A shudder ran over the Airedale; and presently the stump of his tail began to beat the turf, feebly.

"Sandy?"—joyously.

"He's all right," said Cathewe, confidently.

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"Simply knocked out. He's in luck. It's mighty hard to keep a dog these days; and yet I can't honestly blame the motorists. The animals will run at the cars. This is a particularly fine breed. Never saw anything like him around these parts. Big and strong enough to tackle bear." He began to pat the broad head. And the wag of the tail became more energetic.

The girl on her part began to observe. First, the hand, which was lean and brown and well kept. The sleeve of the shirt, however, was frayed at the cuff. The shirt also lacked the top button, and there was a sunburned patch at the base of the throat. Brown corduroys, such as Italian road-menders wore; and the hems were tucked into dusty russet half-boots. (As a matter of fact, Cathewe kept these togs in the office, where he could don them whenever the lure of the highway called, which was every day when the weather was good.) The sight of his face, however, had the effect of a blow. Where had she seen this handsome, vigorous face before? Somewhere; she was positive of that. Fine, sensitive gray eyes and a mouth which would have been called beautiful in a woman. And above this mouth she saw the replica of her father's nose. Then, from the corner of her eye, she saw the book. Jules Fabre, in the original! The face and hands of an artist, the

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clothes of a day-labourer, and a volume of Fabre on insects! She almost forgot the dog.

Here Sandy struggled to his feet, sniffed the grass, his mistress's dress, the man's boots, then shook himself, rather groggily though, as all dogs shake themselves upon coming out of water.

"Sandy is all right. Eh, old top?" Cathewe held out his hand.

The dog eyed the hand, quizzically, and approached. He permitted the strange hand to stroke his head, and his tail wagged a little.

"Well!" said Betty, getting up.

"What's the matter?"

"Sandy never permits strangers to touch him."

"But I'm no stranger"—whimsically.

"What?—you have met him before?"

"Oh, no. But all dogs know me," said Cathewe, picking up his book. "Fine comrades, aren't they? You never have to explain anything to them; they fall in with, they never resent, your moods. To be a kind of god to something! We humans first began to love dogs because they flattered us. I had a little dog a while gone. He was just plain dog. His pedigree was as numerous as a zebra's stripes. But that didn't matter. We understood each other at once. Whenever he laid his head on my knees and looked into my eyes, I wanted to be a better man if I could. But a city

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man cannot keep a dog these days. They will dash at the motors. And Diogenes paid the penalty."

"He was killed?"

"Yes. Instantly."

"I'm sorry. Diogenes. To die, after having found an honest man!" She smiled.

"I wonder." He let his gaze stray off toward the lake. "Am I honest, or do I merely think I am honest?"

Of all the unusual men! was her thought. What a beautiful head! Certainly she had seen it before. But where? She must find out who he was. No man so odd as this one could wander about Bannister without being known.

"What makes you wonder?" she asked.

"A thoroughly honest man ought not to be putting his honesty through the mill of self-analysis; and that's what I have been doing of late."

"Pardon, but I really want to know. Have I ever met you before?"

"I dare say you have seen me from your car."

"Probably that is it. Fabre. You are reading him in the original?"

"Good mental exercise."

"I suppose the ant's life must be very interesting to you."

"Indeed, all life is interesting. Come along. I

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will show you an ant city, a Canton of the insect world."

She ought to have thanked him and declined; but her curiosity was of the most compelling kind, so she followed him afield, the dog at her heels.

Presently the philosopher came to a broad, flat stone. Very carefully he put his fingers under the edge and with a quick heave sent the stone over. The cavity was aswarm with ants. Battalions and regiments scurried about.

"They seem panic-stricken, but they are not. Now watch. See all those white eggs?"

She gazed fascinatedly at the black atoms. They were taking hold of the eggs and drawing them rapidly into innumerable subways. Within two minutes there were but half a dozen ants visible. These crossed and recrossed the city to see if any stores had been overlooked in the retreat. At length they, too, disappeared.

"Why, it is wonderful!" she exclaimed. "And I have passed stones like this all my life, and never dreamed of what was seething beneath. Thanks."

"All cities—human cities—would look like that, if you tore off the roofs. But this is an ancient affair to me. As a boy I used to watch these ants, and I'm afraid I poked them up a bit. Fabre only renewed my interest. Notice the grass roots. These shore up the thousand labyrinths. Rather

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wonderful, isn't it?" He waved a hand toward the surrounding hills. "Teeming with life and eternal war. And once again human beings must try their hand at it. 'What fools these mortals be!' "

She felt vaguely disappointed. "You are a pacifist?"

"Good heavens, no! But it's all so horribly useless. It makes me sad. The world—the earth—so generous and kindly, and men must go on killing each other. And this war will last a hundred years. Four or five years of war and ninety-five years of hate. And soon we shall be hurled into it."

"You believe that?"

"We are a white people, aren't we? But we are like a bear I once saw in the zoo. He was asleep. The attendant began to prod him with a long pole. The bear stirred uneasily. The attendant, full of malice, persisted. After a few minutes of this baiting, the bear suddenly raised his head, caught the pole in his jaws and dragged it from the attendant's hands, and broke it into splinters. Then he raged up and down the bars, wanting nothing so much as to treat the attendant as he had treated the pole. Well, when we wake up, there won't be any bars. . . . See those little white butterflies? Always exterminate them,

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for they bring blight to flowers. There's another flat stone. Suppose we investigate?"

The Airedale, having by this time fully recovered from the shock of his accident, began to inspect sundry rabbit and woodchuck holes, enlarging some of them futilely.

Ostensibly Betty was interested in the new ant city; but her eyes did not convey any memorable impressions to her brain; that was busy with conjecture. A gentleman of her own sort, because he was courteous and unembarrassed. Apparently he knew that she was Dunleigh Mansfield's daughter, and was not in the least awed by the fact. That rather pleased her. He did not introduce himself, which was another good sign. It left her free to recognize him the next time they met or to pass him by. She was quite confident that he was not a native of Bannister. An out-of-doors man and a scholar; the shabby clothes now fitted into the scheme of things. Men did not pursue their studies in natural history, dressed as for a tea party. Who and what was he? Nancy Maddox would know, for Nancy knew everybody in Bannister. He would be very easy to describe. Doubtless she would be meeting him during the winter. She still retained the vague impression, however, that she had seen him before, and not in Bannister.

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Cathewe discoursed lightly and fluently and interspersed his impromptu lecture on natural history with a few happy jests. He talked like a man who was intensely interested in his subject. And yet, back of this ready flow of words, back of the knowledge that impelled them, was another thought. She was lovely and unspoiled. Somehow he wished she had been a bit offish, a little more artificial; this would have confirmed the opinion he had formed of her. Lovely and unspoiled; and yet she could dance. He could not stifle his contempt for any who could frivol these dreadful times. The young woman in America would *not* understand. Over yonder the world was on fire; and over here, syncopated music, laughter, indifference, wastefulness.

The solution, he supposed, in this instance, lay in the fact that she was Dunleigh Mansfield's daughter; her indifference was a part of her inheritance. He must, then, crush out with all the force he possessed the sentiment which had primarily brought him to Bannister. It was all utterly impossible, however one looked at it. He was waging bitter warfare against her father, who, though powerful and ruthless, was rushing blindly to his doom. Out of a lightly spoken jest, a grim earnestness. He must not meet her again; he must sedulously avoid her. He realized now that he

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would be forced to tell Nancy of this chance meeting. He must warn her not to disclose his identity.

It never occurred to him that a request of this sort would serve only to fill Nancy with wonder and question. And the principal question would be: Why should he care whether Betty Mansfield found out that he was seeking the political downfall of her father? Which, later, was precisely the question that did enter Nancy's head.

"Thank you," he heard Betty say. "It has been very interesting. I have read Maeterlinck on the bee, but Fabre is an undiscovered country. Come, Sandy; we must be going."

There was an impulse to offer her hand to this unusual young man, but she smothered it. She turned back toward the highway, the dog leaping and barking joyously.

"A lucky dog," said Cathewe, smiling. "He has defied the law of irresistible force and lives to tell of it. Good afternoon."

He crossed over to his boulder and once more reclined against the sun-warmed granite surface. He waited for a little time, then peered around. Her hat was just vanishing down the drop of the hill. He opened his book—upside down.

"The postern gate!" he murmured.

At half after five Nancy was agreeably surprised by the advent of Betty.

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"Nancy, I've had the queerest adventure," began Betty at once, and rather breathlessly. "No; I don't want any tea. I came for some information. It was so droll and unusual."

And lightly—with those Gallic gestures which came so naturally—she recounted what had taken place on top of the hill.

"Dressed like a tramp and reads Fabre in the original," mused Nancy. She was about to hazard a guess when the telephone in her father's office rang. "Just a moment, Betty. Telephone. It may be some patient of father's." Once at the instrument she recognized Cathewe's voice.

"Nancy, I've had rather an odd experience; and I'm going to depend upon you to help me out. I've met Mansfield's daughter. She may be curious. Please do not disclose my identity. You understand? Mansfield and I are at war. I want to avoid her. Tell me, what is she like?"

"Do you think she is beautiful?"

"Oh, yes. Anybody could see that with half an eye."

"Then," said Nancy, loyally, "interpret her beauty as the condition of her heart and mind. She looks upon her father as a demigod. She knows absolutely nothing. There is no one to hint even. Your newspaper never enters the house. And she is here in the living room at this

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very minute, asking about you. Your call interrupted me just as I was about to tell her. Do you want me to lie, Brand?"

"Lie? Lord, no! Only, I don't want her to know who I am."

"Sooner or later she will find it out. And why in the world should you care?"

"Very well. I'm sorry. Don't lie on my account. Tell her if you must. Good-bye."

Slowly Nancy set the receiver on the hook. She did not hasten back to her guest. Why was her heart heavy with foreboding? What mattered it to Brandon Cathewe whether Betty knew who or what he was? It was inevitable that Betty should learn sooner or later. Why this concern, when Cathewe was quite as ruthless in his pursuit of justice as Dunleigh Mansfield was in pursuit of his dollars? She returned to the living room.

"Dressed like a tramp," she repeated, "and reads Fabre in the original. It might be one of your father's chemists. There is a small army of them out there, and there are all sorts and conditions of men among them."

"I can find out. He was so unusual," said Betty. "He knew who I was."

"And he did not introduce himself?"

"He did not even offer to shake hands when I left him."

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Nancy hated lies, and she hated herself for telling this one, when it was not obligatory in the least. She was a little afraid. Later, she would attempt to analyze this perverse impulse, and she vaguely dreaded what the analysis might reveal.

After his interview with Nancy, Cathewe went in to his mother.

"Play something before the maid comes in to light up."

"What do you want me to play, Sonny?"—in a soft, Southern drawl.

"Rachmaninoff's Prelude."

"Then things aren't well with you?" How easy it had become to read the boy's moods by the kind of music he wanted! It was always indicative. The brave heart of him!

"No, mother. Things aren't as smooth as they might be. Of course I can keep the paper going. The circulation is climbing; and if I hang on long enough, the advertisers will have to come back. What bothers me at this moment is the other phase of the affair."

"The girl?"—a little stab in his mother's heart.

"Yes. I met her to-day in the fields. I can't quite make her out."

"You still believe you are in love with her?"

"I don't know, I honestly don't know. How can I love her, when I have set out to destroy her

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father, or at least render him impotent? I can't have her and wreck him, too, and I can't honourably let him go. The devil and deep blue sea. I started something, didn't I? Well, I'll finish it," and there was metal in his tone. "Come along and play for me."

She sat on the bench, but she did not begin the Prelude. Instead, she struck the opening bars of Farwell's Norwegian Song, plaintive rather than melancholy. She could dimly see him, his chin in his palms, staring at a pattern in the Chinese rug.

And as she played her thoughts travelled afar, to the youth of this singular man-child of hers. She could see him under the great plane-tree, poring over books, odd books for a little boy to read—"Pilgrim's Progress," Pope's "Iliad," "Morte D'Arthur," "Jehan Froissard." And the curious way he had of translating himself into his favourite heroes and creating magnificent exploits of his own! She had not understood then. Those swift and fiery impulses which had once puzzled her were now all understandable. God had given her one of those strange fledglings men call geniuses.

"Better?"

"I am always better when I am with you, mother. Life is an astonishing mess, isn't it?

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For the innocent as well as for the guilty. I, who have never wittingly harmed any one or done a mean thing, I must always carry with me the sense of being hunted—the fear of being found out. And I have dragged you into it."

"I had to come, Sonny. I am your mother. But never mind. God will untangle the web. I have only one fear—that this Mansfield will stumble upon the truth."

"In that case, a new name and a new faring forth. Ishmael and his mother! I should not care if I stood alone. Over in Italy, who would bother or care? But here it is different. We would be shunned like lepers. I told Doctor Maddox. And he understood."

"You told him?"

"The name only. He did not get the significance at first; but when he did, he came to me. Oh, it is safe enough there. He's the dearest old chap. He gives more than half his time away. I've known him to desert a lucrative patient to administer to the poor for nothing, even buying their medicine for them. I don't know why I told him. I just did, that was all."

"Sonny, I'd be very happy with Nancy as my daughter."

"The substance rather than the mirage. But I don't love her, mother. I know that. But is

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the other a mirage? Nancy says not. What a muddle! My new book—I'm afraid I'll have to chuck it. There are too many other things buzzing about in my head. Here comes Mignon. Dinner's ready."

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CHAPTER VII

IN THE great manor on Polygon Hill, Betty sat curled up on the broad window-seat, watching the receding gold and scarlet of the September sunset. That is, she seemed to be watching it. In reality, she was just recovering from a stunning, paralyzing mental blow. The door to the Apocalypse had opened slightly. On her knees lay a crumpled newspaper. She found it on the floor of the limousine, where some sardonic jester had tossed it.

"My father! . . . They lie, they lie!"

She sprang up, tore the offending sheet into ribbons and rammed them down with her boot into the waste-basket. Then she began to pace the room, rocking her head slightly. She did not know what it meant, but for the first time in her life the Mansfield blood was in the ascendant. Every pulse-beat of it demanded instant reprisal—vengeance. By and by she flung herself upon the bed.

Down below, in the study, a local banker eyed the end of his cigar through half-closed lids. Mansfield, his fingers pyramided, watched him expectantly.

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"Do you want some unsolicited advice?" asked the banker, finally.

"Go ahead with it," said Mansfield, smiling tolerantly.

"Beat him to it."

"What do you mean by that?"

"Clean up these grogshops, which you really own. Tear down your rotten fire-traps. Give the reform candidate the city hall to play with for two years. Anticipate the young anarchist. Disarm him."

Mansfield laughed. "You are nearing your second childhood. You ought to know that I am not in the habit of getting scared."

"Well, I am. My vision is clearing up, fast. Legally, you are practically unassailable. It is the moral side of it that will break you in the end."

"Break me?" —incredulously.

"Yes. Dunleigh, this war is clearing up a lot of fog. The people are *thinking*. They are finding the true cleavage between right and wrong. I warn you, they are going to do away with this political game as you and I know it. There is a tremendous agitation going on. If we get into this war—and it now looks quite likely to me—there will be millions of soldiers returning some day; and we older chaps will be wise to get our house in order against that day. A tide is rising. Down

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in the city I feel it. Up here you don't. It would be a good idea to see which way this world is going to roll in order to keep your feet. This fellow Cathewe is no ordinary disturber. I'm beginning to admire him. He knows exactly what he wants. He never wastes a word; and his simplicity has a downright touch of genius in it. I defy you to find a libel in his editorial comments. That boy goes down among men. He hasn't accused you of doing anything criminal as understood by law. He attacks you from the moral side. Mark me, he'll soon be after your new munitions plant. You are weak there, Dunleigh. A scientific agglomeration of shacks, for high explosives; but water is lacking, in sufficiency, anyhow. The temporary hospital you have erected is too near the tanks. An explosion would knock it to flinders. A serious explosion would wreck half the town. Germany isn't going to let that go on without some attempt to put it out of business."

"That hospital was the fool architect's fault. It looked all right in the plans."

"Remedy it."

"At the cost of seven thousand? No, thanks."

The banker shrugged. "Still, I'd fix the water, if I were you."

"Let the city fire department advise me."

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"They are afraid of you, and you know it. If anything does happen out there—for lack of water—it will be criminal negligence; and this fellow Cathewe will hang your hide on his wall. I'm talking plainly to you because I am your friend. And I consider my advice sound. All right. For the moment we'll drop that, and take up this editor. You wrote me to investigate his financial standing. I have."

"Well, how much has he borrowed to keep his vituperous rag going?"

"Nothing."

"What? You mean he hasn't borrowed on his notes?"

"Not a penny."

"How has he kept going on, then?"

"I'll come to that in a moment. There are but seven stockholders in all. They have promised never to dispose of their interests to you."

"But I don't want the rag. All I need is to have him lose his following."

"And he isn't losing it. The paper's circulation is growing daily, despite the fact that you struck off his local advertising. Something really vital is going on. The poor are beginning to boycott the shops that have withdrawn their advertising at your command. Soon the advertisers will drift back of necessity."

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Mansfield frowned.

"Dunleigh, there's a mystery I can't get to the bottom of. There are four banks in Bannister. Being president of one of them and a stockholder in all of them, I am in a position to find out things. This young fellow Cathewe has an active account in each bank, and it is evident that he is paying the losses out of his pocket. Once a month he replenishes these withdrawals."

"Drafts on New York?"

"Cash. Nothing traceable."

"How much is his active account in each bank?" Mansfield could not disguise his growing bewilderment.

"One hundred thousand dollars, cash!"

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CHAPTER VIII

"NEARLY half a million?" gasped Mansfield, with a full feeling in his throat.

"Yes. I repeat," continued the banker: "there's a mystery here that's beyond me. Somewhere there is a vast fortune behind this young fellow. Four hundred thousand will keep his paper going without advertisements for ten years. Another queer thing. I don't know about the other banks, but at mine he has two accounts, one general and one special. The general account is never more than two or three thousand. This is added to from time to time by money orders payable to Brandon Cathewe. The special account is never drawn against except to pay the paper's pay-checks and expenses. Not a postage-stamp out of that for his own use. He lives simply. The only servant is a maid who does general housework. His mother is a charming and beautiful woman who plays the piano magnificently. Beyond these facts, a blank wall as thick as the Grand Cañon. Dunleigh, better get the rights of the game. Four hundred thousand, behind a newspaper like the *Herald*, has a tremendous power. My advice is

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to get your political and financial house in order." The banker rose.

"It's in pretty good order as it is, Dawson. I'm an ironmonger by trade. I know how to handle hot irons."

The banker laughed. "The trouble is, you've never been licked. That's the matter with you. Well, it's my belief that this young David has never been licked, either. And he is acquiring an asset more powerful than money."

"And that is?"

"Public opinion. It's beginning to push up behind him in this odd campaign. Never mind coming to the door. I can find the way."

For a long time Mansfield sat perfectly motionless, but his brain was active enough. Upon analysis, he found that his assurance had received an astounding jolt. Four hundred thousand dollars! The Mansfield millions, then, would have no more force against this newspaper than so many feathers in the wind. For once he was confronted with a situation to which there seemed to be no handle. As Dawson said, it was red-hot. There was no denying it; he might as well face it squarely. In a manner that smacked of miracles, the young fellow had actually become a force in Bannister. Why did he not come forward and demand that he, Mansfield, fulfil his side of that bargain?

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Suddenly he felt a surge of resentment on Betty's account.

He got up and began to walk about the room. The madman had said definitely that he loved Betty. He had come to Bannister to make good in order that he might have the right to pay court to Betty. Mansfield was sportsman enough to admit that the young scoundrel had come through. But by a singular twist of events he had put himself beyond the pale, so far as Dunleigh Mansfield's daughter was concerned. He had, as it were, conducted himself like an untrained hound; taken up one scent and let another lure him away, which, after all, was very satisfying to Betty's father.

But four hundred thousand dollars! Mansfield tugged at his crisp moustache. That signified caste; and reluctantly he was forced to admit that he had a respectable enemy.

All these cogitations only enlarged his determination to crush the upstart. There would be some flaw. No man was perfect. There would be a chink in the armour. The thing was to find out where this fortune came from.

A droll idea entered Mansfield's head. He was not without humour. So he returned to his desk, looked into the telephone book, and called a number. A woman's voice answered. It was a sweet, drawling voice.

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"I wish to speak with Mr. Cathewe."

"He is in his study and cannot be disturbed."

"It is Dunleigh Mansfield who is talking."

"Just a moment, please."

Three or four minutes passed.

"Hello! This is Mr. Cathewe. What do you wish to speak to me about?"

"I wish to ask you some questions, frankly. I am curious, among other things, to learn why you hate me."

"I do not hate you. My attitude is absolutely impersonal. In some respects I greatly admire you; in others, I look upon you with contempt."

Mansfield suppressed the wrath that boiled up. "That's blunt enough. What would you say if I expressed the opinion that you carried out your part of the bargain, and that the hour had arrived for me to carry out mine?"

A long pause. "Events have made that impossible. I release you."

"You do not hold me, then?"

"No."

"I see. You are fickle by nature."

"No. But I am suspicious. You are laying a trap for me."

"Indeed, no. I am merely satisfying a curiosity. I am very happy to learn that you have such

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good sense of values. Still, I am a good loser. I will introduce you to my daughter."

"Between your daughter and me there is the space of two worlds. I regret that folly on board the ship. Moreover, I am a poor man, Mr. Mansfield. I did not know, until I arrived here, that your daughter was one of the richest heiresses in America."

"Poor!"

"Yes. Every dollar I have in this world I earn by honest labour."

"I don't quite get that. I have been duly informed that you have on deposit nearly half a million."

Another pause. "That money does not belong to me, Mr. Mansfield."

Mansfield heard a click, and he knew that Cathewe had abruptly concluded the remarkable interview. He laid the receiver on the hook, slowly, still retaining it in his grasp. Didn't belong to him! That four hundred thousand, which was constantly being replenished from secret sources, was not Cathewe's! Cathewe would be the last man in the world to lie about it, under the existing circumstances.

Mansfield sank back in his chair, about as completely bewildered as he had ever been in all his life. With furrowed brow he searched all avenues.

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Particularly one, the only one that seemed logical. Who among his great financial enemies would seek to hector him on the moral side and let his attractive millions be? The question—the absurdity of it—blocked this avenue at once. There remained but one other. Some rich fool of a philanthropist was backing this hair-brained Galahad. Dawson was right. There was an abysmal mystery here.

His original deduction began to lose its proportions, began to break and vanish like mist in the sunshine. No son of a fallen enemy would have such backing as this rogue Cathewe had. A form of confusion began to edge into his mind. And thereafter the thought of Cathewe always reawoke it, jumbling perspectives. The point is, Mansfield missed the truth because he did not believe there existed in the world a purely disinterested man. He could not get away from the idea that Cathewe was here in Bannister with an axe to grind. But he was determined to solve the riddle, if money and patience amounted to anything.

He then wrote two letters. The first was local. It was to the chief of police. It demanded as quickly as possible a good photograph of Brandon Cathewe. It did not matter how it was obtained. The second letter was directed to a celebrated detective agency in New York. The best man they had was wanted immediately.

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"Dinner is served, sir," announced the butler from the doorway.

"Is Miss Betty down?"

"She begs to be excused, sir."

"Is she ill?"

"I don't know, sir. I knocked on her door, and she told me she would not be down."

"Hold the dinner until I see."

"Very good, sir."

Mansfield ran upstairs and rapped on the door of his daughter's boudoir.

"It is father, Betty. Are you ill?"

"No, Daddy. Just tired and headachy."

"May I come in?"

He heard the key turn in the lock, and he pushed in the door. He saw instantly that she had been crying.

"Why, Honey, what's happened?"

"I'm ashamed! I've been in a horrible rage," she confessed.

He laid his hands on her shoulders. "And what have you been raging about?" He drew her toward him.

"I . . . I saw that article in the *Herald*. Someone threw it into the limousine. It made me wild with fury. After you have done so much for Bannister!"

A warm glow pervaded his heart. He had

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never sensed a tingle before comparable to this. His girl was furious because he had been attacked!

"You mustn't waste any tears on that twaddle, Betty. It's just politics; it's all a part of the game."

"But I want you to fight back. What would Bannister do without you? Your genius has made it rich and prosperous. It isn't fair to lie like that, even in politics."

Mansfield was a political boss of the old order, invisible. Originally he had entered the game simply to protect his vast interests from political blackmail. Then the thing got into his blood. He suddenly found himself invested with tremendous power. He had always been fond of chess; now he played it with men, like the Indian princes of Agra. He cared nothing for office himself. That wasn't the game. The thrill lay in the power to pull the wires, to make the manikins dance to whatever tune he chose to whistle.

The present arraignment related to the inefficiency of the local fire department, where he kept three or four of his faithful but now useless henchmen. It was his way of pensioning off the loyal. Cathewe had accused him of placing the public in peril in order to pay his political debts. Ordinarily, Mansfield would have ignored the assault.

"Why should you care?"—curious.

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"Because. . . ." She snuggled against his shoulder. "It's because you are all I have, Daddy; and I love you."

Mansfield stared over the bronze bead. What entered his heart now was not a warm glow. It had the chill and edge of his own crucible steel. There surged over him a great baffling longing to be alone, a longing beyond reach of his comprehension. Something had happened—he did not know what it was—and he felt that he must be alone to attack the riddle successfully.

"Come along to dinner, Honey. It's only politics. I've been through it before. There's no use bothering your pretty head about it. You haven't got the hang of things in America yet. A man in my position cannot strike back publicly. The only way you can break an editor is to buy his sheet and turn him adrift."

This statement followed Betty into her dreams that night.

"The fellow would like nothing better than to have me enter a game of jousts with him; and I refuse him that satisfaction. Printer's ink is the blackest. You can't rub it out any more than you can rub out a thought, an idea. Don't you worry. Your father knows how to take care of himself in sports of this calibre. Come along to dinner. I've got a surprise for you. I'm sending for your

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aunt—your mother's sister. You ought not to be the only woman in this big house. Your aunt is a charming woman. And there is one thing, little lady, I want you always to remember: Your mother's fortune makes you rich in your own right. Do as you please with it. And when the day comes and you find a man of your fancy, marry him. I'll trust you to pick out one worth while."

He laughed, tucked her arm under his, and led her to the stairs.

Around about ten that night you would have found her on the floor before her boudoir fire, reading her letters. Somehow, they always soothed her when she was troubled. She was passionately fond of the beautiful. To-night, however, a singular break appeared frequently. She would read so far into a letter, and then a picture would drift in between: blue sky, blue water, the vague scent of clover, and an odd young man bending over flat stones.

Here, on her knees, were the thoughts of the perfect lover. And he had vanished. Who was he and what was he and where was he? Why should he have striven to capture her interest only to end the romance abruptly? Oh, she knew he was alive. Had he been in danger he would have forewarned her. Had he been killed in France, she

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would have had his last letter. Why should he hurt her so?

She wanted to throw the letters into the fire. It was impossible. She knew that she would have regretted the act throughout her life. But to find some way out of the thralldom!

At length she tied up the letters and rose. To-morrow she would tour the offices to see if that strange young man was employed there. He would serve as a diversion.

She put the letters in a Florentine box, which she restored to a drawer. She was about to close this when her eye was attracted by a slip of paper. She drew it out, returned to the fire, and inspected it. It was a typewritten list of the bonds and stocks and accumulated funds of which her private fortune consisted. Away down toward the end she came upon something which she had not noticed previously: "Fifty shares The Banister *Morning Herald*."

"The only way you can break an editor," she murmured, "is to buy his sheet and turn him adrift."

Thereupon a great and glorious idea popped into her head.

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CHAPTER IX

MANSFIELD could not read. The Life of Benvenuto Cellini palled. One of his favourite books, and he could not get interested in it because mistily a bronze head seemed to come into focus whenever his eye happened to stray from the printed page. Furious on his account. The novelty of having someone sentimentally interested in him, someone who cared, who could be hurt to the point of tears by a little watery mud-slinging such as this fellow Cathewe had indulged in!

He tossed the volume upon the table and got up. He lighted a cigar; then he went into the hall for his hat and topcoat. He left the house through the conservatory door.

It was moonlight, and a stroll about the gardens might settle this unusual mental turmoil. He saw the light in Betty's room, and he paused to stare up at it. His! His daughter, as different from the run of girls as gold is different from brass. He had sent her away so as not to be bothered by a growing child. As he looked back he realized that he had never speculated about her future.

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Financially, it was impregnable, of course; and as a consequence of this knowledge he had never been concerned with any other. He had never made any plans for her final home-coming. Furious on his account, because she loved him!

He passed along the aisles of rose bushes. There were still some flowers in bloom. He bent over two or three of them, for he was fond of roses. This garden had been one of his hobbies for years. It was the one place in all the world where his hands came into contact with Mother Earth. He had always made it a point to be here in June.

"By George!" he exclaimed.

He pushed through the bushes to the next row, where there was a magnificent pink Arends. He cut it with his penknife and drew it through his buttonhole. He threw away his half-consumed cigar. One could always find tobacco, but a rose like this came but once or twice in the life of a bush. He bent his head to scent the cool, fresh perfume. Then he glanced again at Betty's window. It was dark.

Each variety of rose was squared off by paths paved with pebbles brought up from the lake; then there would be a row of Lombardy poplars, trimmed to the standard of eight feet. They made excellent hedges. In the very centre of the gardens was a marble basin, with a faun seated at

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one end, his pipes emitting thin streams of water. The atmosphere was Italian.

The tinkle of the water sounded pleasantly on Mansfield's ears. Suddenly he raised his chin and sniffed. Pipe tobacco; and good tobacco, too! Swiftly his glance roved. Evidently he was not alone in the garden. After diligent scrutiny, he observed a shadow on the far side of a hedge. One of the gardeners? No; they all smoked abominable weed.

"Who's there?" he demanded, sharply.

The shadow began to move. Mansfield, being in vigorous health and sound of wind, ran along the path. The interloper started for the driveway. Presently he, too, broke into a run. As they passed the house, Mansfield saw that he was gaining. But the uninvited guest lengthened his stride as he neared the street. He dashed out of the grounds and turned toward town. Mansfield made a short cut, and arrived at the sidewalk as the other ran across the street diagonally. This manœuvre set his face under the full glare of the street lamp.

Mansfield stopped. Cathewe, prowling around in the gardens? Thunder-struck, he leaned against a maple and tried to moderate his breathing. Cathewe! The fool, then, was really in love with Betty! He could give up the woman he

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loved for the sake of an ideal—an ideal which, if pursued unfalteringly, might break her father. Very good. He would give this meddling fool a handful before the course was run. Presently he should learn that hitherto Dunleigh Mansfield had simply been playing with him.

First of all, he must solve the riddle of the fellow's resources. There was something sinister behind that four hundred thousand—a hidden menace. For no one knew better than he what money could do. Four hundred thousand that stayed four hundred thousand, no matter how much it was drawn against. Why this mystery? Why did Cathewe deny that it was his, since he had absolute control of it?

Another thing: he was young and handsome. Why did he ignore the life of the town, the clubs? He could not possibly be unused to that side of life. Mansfield recalled plainly his polished address that morning on shipboard. There should be a mighty good cause for this isolation. He went to the Maddox house a good deal, and perhaps the doctor would be able to lift a corner of the curtain. At any rate, there could be no harm in setting a trap for Maddox.

Mansfield returned to the house, his usually cold and precise brain off its balance. The whole affair was so absurd that it resembled a dream

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rather than a reality. He hung up his hat and coat mechanically, plucked the rose from the buttonhole, and proceeded to his room.

"Mooning under Betty's window!" he murmured.

Deliberately he filled a cut-glass vase and set the rose in it. A glorious flower, pink as a sleeping infant's cheek. His thoughts travelled back; but he could not remember Betty in her cradle. Odd, that he should try to recall Betty in her cradle.

From this thought his recollection jumped consistently to another. The girl's mother. He touched the rose with his finger tips, and then pulled at his chin. In all these years he had not visited that grave. He had argued with his conscience that he hated depressing thoughts, but to-night the truth came home. It had been too much trouble. His years had been so crowded with actions and affairs that this shameful neglect had never before revealed itself. He was fifty-three now; he was slowing up; he was beginning to notice the little backwaters, whereas previously he had been cognizant only of the central current.

He had missed something. No; it wasn't romance. He had had his fill of that in steel. He knew what he had missed. It was the thing that had lured that fellow Cathewe to come prowling

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into the gardens, merely to stand under Betty's window. Love.

He sat down on the edge of the bed. His attitude would have recalled to you that drawing of Doré's—of the man who had in greediness killed the goose that laid the golden eggs.

Love. The thing that had transformed the gentle Betty into a lioness because he had been attacked; that had set Cathewe down in this strange, bustling city, confident of miracles; that had welded together the Maddoxes, father and mother and daughter. Even Sandy, the Airedale, knew what it was. And as he thought of Sandy, it struck Mansfield as odd that the dog had not barked and made Cathewe's presence known; for Sandy was no lapdog.

Slowly he rose, picked up the vase, tiptoed into the hall, and set it before Betty's door. He was smiling when he came back, smiling because he had just discovered that there was tucked away in a far corner of his heart a spark of emotionalism, a thing he had all his life scorned as weakness.

Next morning Betty came into the breakfast room with a joyous rush. She was as pleasing to the eye as a summer cloud: in filmy white, a pink boudoir cap on her head, and the rose pinned to her bodice.

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"Daddy Mansfield, did you put this rose by my door?"

"I found it in the garden last night," he said, opening his newspaper.

"But why did you give it to me that way?"

What had happened to his brain? he wondered. He could not answer her directly. "I thought perhaps you had gone to bed. There won't be many more this year. Wait until next June. I know it's hopeless to try to compete with southern France and Italy; but you'll admit that there are some roses in your garden."

She walked over to him and stooped. "You may kiss me for that. . . . No, no!"—as his moustache brushed her forehead. "I didn't say tickle me; I said kiss me!"

He took her head between his palms and kissed both her cheeks, soundly. She ran back to her chair and began to volley French at him. He stumbled about considerably in his endeavour to follow. Finally he laughed.

"You're too much for me. My French is motor truck style."

"Daddy, I want to go back to France."

"France?—back to the terror?"

"I'm not afraid. I'm a good nurse. I've had good training in Washington. When I look about me—luxury everywhere—I feel like a criminal.

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My friends, Daddy, that were so gay and handsome . . . and some of them are dead! To do something with my hands for the land that was so kind to me."

"But *I* need you, Honey!" he cried. And as the words passed his lips, the miracle lay revealed. That was it, he needed her. The mystification of the recent hours was no more. He needed her. The thought of her leaving him had torn away and shredded into nothingness the last bits of fog. He needed her. Subtly she had entered into his life and become an integral part of it. All the awkwardness of the situation vanished.

"Why do you need me, Daddy?" —in a kind of terrified whisper.

"Because I love you. Because I've only just found it out. I've been a bad father, Betty, but God knows I want to prove to you that I can be something else!"

Five minutes later, when the butler came to see if anything more was wanted, he paused at the threshold for a space, and silently returned the way he had come. It was not for him to disturb that picture in the bright morning sunshine—those two with their arms wound tightly about each other.

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CHAPTER X

CATHEWE'S newspaper, for all that it was losing money daily, was a success. Its editorial opinions began to be copied far and wide across the land. He thought and wrote clearly upon all subjects. He possessed that fortunate gift of irony that made even his victims smile. In fact, he woke up Bannister; and the whole town was watching his affair. For a long time the poor fought shy of him; but by and by they comprehended that an honest man, who wanted nothing for himself, was offering to aid them; and in his dire need they flocked to his standard. The middle class and the intellectuals were also behind him. He was fighting for the redemption of the city, to free it from the greedy clutches of the political vultures.

His editorials were full of punch and prophecy. Sooner or later America would be in. Americans should prepare individually against the inevitable hour. He never belittled the Teutonic victories. On the contrary, he emphasized them, in order to bring home the danger of America's further aloofness. His war-bulletin generally had a

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crowd before it; for this bulletin never grew hysterical.

He had gathered about him the best staff in the city, best equipped mentally and best paid. After eight at night he was generally to be found in his office. His door was always open, for he was democratic. He was easily approached, whether it was the new cub or the star reporter. It was a happy family of which he was the head.

But he was losing money. He had heard tales about Moloch; and now he understood. Each additional boost to his circulation made a corresponding loss. Without the local advertisements, this ascending popularity was becoming more and more costly. And any day his stockholders might sell out. This would not nullify his control, but it might add infinite confusion, internal warfare. Still that mysterious reluctance to buy them up. No matter from what angle he attacked this reluctance, it eluded analysis. And all his mother had in the world in jeopardy, too!

So far he had won two big battles. He had made the Health Department an efficient organization and he had blocked a deal by the local traction company (Mansfield's) to charge a six-cent fare. And he had made the last election of Mansfield's Congressional candidate extremely difficult. He had also made himself solid with the

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public on another count. He had repeatedly declined to run for any office whatsoever. It is a curious commentary on American politics that when a man declines to run for office he is at once written down as unimpeachably honest.

At noon one day in October Cathewe came down for his breakfast, a frown between his eyes.

"What is it, Sonny?" asked his mother.

"What is what?"

"The meaning of that frown."

"Oh. Well, I had a curious experience at the office last night. I heard an ahem and looked up. Bang! went a flash-light; and before I could recover from my astonishment, the photographer had vanished. Took a picture of me—stole it. And I can't make head or tail of it. It certainly wasn't done as a jest."

She laid her hand on his head. "Supposing——"

But he interrupted. "I thought of that. To identify me. But I was Cathewe those two years in New York. No matter. I'm here to stick, mother. I have found a rich farrow, and I've planted a healthy seed. This is going to be the home town. But I must get that new book done. Our funds are getting low."

"I can always teach music."

"Never again that, mother. You're never going to touch the piano except for your own

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pleasure. You are on the retired list. I'll finish my breakfast and tackle the book again. I've had an offer of forty-five hundred for the serial rights, and I've an idea that this yarn will make a good movie. Seven chapters out of twenty done, which is a fair start. I've got it all outlined. It's merely lack of application. They are dramatizing 'Prosaic Lives'; but you never can tell what a play will do. If it fails I shan't lose anything. If it goes, our financial worries will be over."

"What an odd boy you are, Sonny!"

"How am I odd?"

"You might have put your conscience to sleep and lived on the fat of the land."

"Would you love me like you do if I had?"

"No, Sonny." And she kissed him.

Shortly after he entered his study and closed the door. She saw no more of him until four, when he signified that he was off for a walk in the hills.

He had not been gone more than twenty minutes when Nancy's smart runabout stopped at the curb. Two or three times the week she carried Mrs. Cathewe off for a ride in the country.

At the same hour to-day father's clattering chariot of mercy rolled under the Mansfield porte-cochère. But more of that anon.

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Mrs. Cathewe had to change, so for a few moments Nancy was left to her own devices. She saw the study door wide open; and impelled by a curiosity she could not define, she stepped across the threshold. In a house that was a miracle for orderliness, this study afforded her a shock. Books scattered over the floor, the air filled with the strong scent of tobacco, a desk littered with paper, a spindle fat with notes, a wicker basket filled to the brim with closely written sheets, a waste-basket choked with crumpled, discarded efforts.

She approached the desk on tiptoe, as if afraid she might disturb the spirit which ruled over this room. Three pipes lay on an ashtray. Pencils everywhere, sharp and blunt. The one thing that had a touch of orderliness was the stack of blank paper arranged before the empty chair. She could see that something had been written on the top sheet, so she bent to see what it was. A name, repeated many times. How often she had wasted paper in this fashion! The hand wrote while the thought was roving afar.

George Cottar, George Cottar, repeated perhaps a dozen times.

"George Cottar!" She spoke the name aloud. A pile of manuscript and the name George Cottar! The illumination left her temporarily blinded. The Brushwood Boy—George Cottar—Brandon

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Cathewe! Without meaning to, she stumbled upon a tremendous secret. Why, Brand was the novelist; and hiding his light under the bushel like this! What did that signify? Why didn't he wear his crown, his laurels, openly?

Impulsively—at that moment bereft of the sense of trespass—she reached down into the waste-basket and picked up one of the crumpled sheets, and smoothed it out. A rejected sheet; he would never miss it. So she folded it and put it in a pocket. Then she stole forth, her eyes shining and her cheeks aflame.

But once in the living room the enormity of her trespass came full upon her. She had been guilty of a shameful act. She must return that stolen sheet. It did not matter that he had rejected it; she had no right to it. Still, she hesitated—and was lost. Mrs. Cathewe came in, ready for the ride.

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CHAPTER XI

MANSFIELD had an odd experience—for him—that afternoon. A representative of the local merchants had called to ask him to release them from their promise regarding the boycott of the *Herald*.

The representative sat on the extreme edge of his chair and twirled his derby as he talked. He was distinctly ill at ease. Not particularly happy over the character of his office: he saw into the future, himself broken and ruined for having dared beard this colossus in his den.

Mansfield's handsome face, however, offered no indication of the chagrin that was consuming him. Here was a real defeat, a sinister one; and stormy words and reproaches would not serve to turn back the tide. He saw the grim walls of his fortress disintegrate before his eyes, as it were. For all the bitterness in his heart, he felt the inclination to laugh. Out of a callous jest, this buffet! Had not he himself sent Cathewe to Bannister?

"We are sorry, Mr. Mansfield, but we can't carry this on any longer. We don't want to offend you or lose the trade of the thousands you employ,

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but we have come to the conclusion that it would be far more profitable for us to cater to the other seventy odd thousand and let your people go. The local trade has fallen off to such an extent that it will soon force some of us to the wall. Somehow this young fellow has got hold of the public mind. Folks hereabouts are convinced that he isn't getting a square deal, and they are telling us so plainly by turning their trade toward the mail-order houses. We don't want to offend you, but on the other hand, neither do we wish to go broke. What answer shall I carry back?"

"That they are under no further obligations," answered Mansfield quietly.

"Our thanks, Mr. Mansfield. We shall renew our contracts with the *Herald* at once."

As he went out, he passed Doctor Maddox coming in.

"Well, Dunleigh, what's the trouble?" asked Maddox, setting his battered case on the floor beside his chair. "Tobacco heart?"

"No, John. I sent for you because I wish to ask an honest man a few simple questions."

"As a patient or as a friend?"

"Hanged if I know!"—whimsically. "But have I any friends?"

Maddox sat back abruptly. "Do you need any?" he countered.

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"I'm beginning to wonder."

"Well, I've always had a sneaking regard for you."

"Based upon what?"

"You never were afraid of anything or anybody. I like courage."

"Even when it's on the wrong side of the trench? John, I'd like to know for one thing what you honestly think of Dunleigh Mansfield."

Maddox, plainly distressed, pulled his beard. "What's happened to you?"

"An inconceivable thing. I've fallen in love with something."

"What?"

"My daughter."

"Nothing abnormal about that. But I begin to see. You've been looking over your shoulder, I suspect."

"Exactly what do you mean by that?"

"Tell me what you want to, and I'll answer as an honest friend."

"What do you know about this fellow Brandon Cathewe?"

"Oh." The doctor was patently disappointed. "I know him to be as clean and white as a hound's tooth."

"His past?"

"I know nothing of that, and little I care. It's

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what he is that counts with me. Dunleigh, I'm glad you've fallen in love with Betty. It's bound to change your point of view. You've made Bannister prosperous, but on a rotten foundation. You've been hard and cruel. Remember, you asked for this. You've done mean things, too. I'll never forget the end of that poor inventor. Oh, yes, it was good business; but you did not need those extra thousands. You have set out to break Cathewe because he is the first man who ever dared oppose you openly. And I don't believe you will succeed."

"Why?"

"Because he represents Right and you represent Might. It is Germany against the world in miniature. So long as you gain your ends, what do you care about the ruin you leave in your wake? I understand you. It is a kind of game with you. Any kind of an obstacle is intolerable to you."

"That's plain speaking, John."

"You asked for it. And there's another thing I can't forget. Your wife. Oh, she had everything. But you crushed her under your lust for power. She married you because she loved you; and you saw only her physical perfections. She was one of your pawns. Bitter? Well, so I am. I've stumbled across your trail so many times, and always I saw the iron heel. Has this frightful war

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touched you, I wonder? Is it anything more to you than a new way of adding to your treasure? On the other hand, I've always held that there was a soul in you somewhere, if something could crack the gold encasement. If you have fallen in love with Betty, then you are on the way. You could not possibly love that child—I brought her into this world, Dunleigh—and do anything mean. Get your house in order. Call in this boy and ask him what he wants—and give it to him. It isn't you; there's nothing personal. It's merely he's a kind of Sir Galahad. He has set forth to right wrongs where he finds them. I don't know what brought him to Bannister originally. But he's found a man's job here, and tackled it properly."

"All this is quite complimentary to me," said Mansfield, dryly. "Then you advise me to throw up my hands and cry *Kamerad?* John, my position is impregnable."

"On the money side, yes. Man, there's a great thing under your hand. Make a clean breast of it to that girl. Lord, Lord, how she will love you then! But if you deceive her and she finds it out, you will lose her."

Mansfield drew his palm across his forehead. "First, I've got to find out where Cathewe got his four hundred thousand. Did you know that he had that amount in the local banks?"

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"No." But the doctor did not exhibit any surprise.

"Do you accept him in your house as an equal?"

"Assuredly!"

"Would you consider him as a son-in-law?" pressed Mansfield.

Maddox thought for a moment. "Yes."

"By George, that fellow has hypnotized you!"

"Not noticeably. Maybe you know why he came to Bannister?"

"I do!" shot back Mansfield. "But I can keep a secret, too. Besides, if I told you, you would say I was spoofing you, as the English say. No man in his right mind. . . . Well, no matter," broke off Mansfield impatiently. "I thought you might throw a little light on his past."

"What would you call a past?"

"Something off-colour."

"Then you may rest easy. That boy never did or thought anything off-colour. He couldn't. And he's no milksop, as you know. Were you enemies before he came here?"

"I had forgotten his very existence. So you have written down your boyhood friend as a rogue!"

"I won't answer that. I'll abide by what you have written down yourself,"—shrewdly.

Mansfield laughed. "I'll travel on my own.

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But you won't find anything you'd call mean in the deal. I can promise you that. But I shall fight Cathewe with all I have and all I am. I can promise you that also. One of us must break."

"I'm on the boy's side, Dunleigh," replied Maddox, getting up.

"I suspected you would be. But let us understand each other on one point. Nothing we do must come between my Betty and your Nancy."

"I agree to that. Nothing could come between those two." Maddox glanced at his watch professionally. "Shall I put this on the monthly bill? You wanted my advice."

"I've always been fond of you, John."

"I'll wait until I see what's going to happen to that white corner in your soul before I express my sentiments. But I'll repeat my advice: Call up Cathewe; give him what he wants. Give me what I want. Give Betty what she wants. Give. That's the whole trouble with you, Dunleigh. You've never given anything but money. Well, if you're any worse by night, call me in," and Maddox picked up his bag and marched out into the hall.

That night as he sat before the fire in the library—his office hours over—his pipe going comfortably, Nancy walked over and sat down in

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his lap, took the pipe from his teeth, and laid it on the ashtray. Then she seized his ears and drew his head right about face.

"Father Maddox, who is Digby Hallowell?"

His start nearly upset her. "Where did you hear that name?"

"From you."

"From me? But that's impossible!"

"Don't you know that you have lately acquired the habit of muttering out loud when you are overtired? Half a dozen times I have heard you mutter that name as if it were some tremendous thing."

"Nancy," he said, gravely, "you will do father a great favour if you will forget you ever heard me utter it. I feel, by uttering that name aloud, even unconsciously, that I have broken my faith as a physician."

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CHAPTER XII

CATHEWE saw Betty frequently. Sometimes she was on horseback; sometimes he saw her entering or leaving a fashionable shop; sometimes she was in her limousine. And he saw her in the written page, between the covers of books, in the dark corners, in the fire, in the smoke from his pipe. He could avoid her actually, but not spiritually. She persisted in entering every dream he had.

All this started an unending, philosophical musing. Human beings could do such things—fall in love with a face and then permit it to haunt one! Even if he hadn't been fighting her father, the situation would have been quite as hopeless and impossible. She would one day be a very rich woman; and he would never be anything but a scribbler. On the other hand, the little odds and ends he had gathered relative to her character rather convinced him that she was democratic, that lack of money could not constitute a barrier on the way to her heart.

It did not matter that he had been born and educated in Europe; there was a characteristic

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in him essentially American: he could not possibly live upon his wife's bounty, after the accepted custom of the Latin and Teutonic male. To his mind, that was degradation. This had not been instilled into his mind; it had been born there, it was instinctive, it was Anglo-Saxon. If ever he married, his wife must lean upon him; the rewards of his labour should be the financial prop.

Yet it was pleasant indeed to dream what might have been. For this was the one woman; nothing could shut out this fact. He had moody spells, but these waxed and waned in the small hours of the morning, during the twenty-minute walk from the office to his home.

All this set its mark upon him, influenced him subconsciously, and almost ran him upon the rocks. To make a fortune himself, legitimately, to write a tremendously popular novel or play. Betty never could be his; but he became fired with the natural ambition to reach a financial level somewhere near hers.

When the advertising men of the various shops penitently entered the business office of the *Herald* the next morning, asking to renew their contracts, the business manager called up Cathewe, who had an extension telephone at the side of his bed. Drowsily Cathewe caught the f st few words, then he became wide awake.

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"All of them?"

"Yes, sir. They want their spaces back to-morrow."

"The old contracts are dead."

"I've got new ones all ready, with the cash line blank. Do you want to come down, or shall I handle it?"

"I'll leave it to you. But listen carefully: the *Herald* has gained twenty thousand since those chaps deserted us. Add twenty per cent. to the old scale."

"Wouldn't it be better to soak them with the January renewal?"

"You don't understand the big thing that's happened. Those fellows are not in the office because they are sorry for us. They are up against a wall, and we're the only way out. Twenty per cent. and a year's run. When a man offers you a Corona, you don't ask for a stogie. Those are the terms. They can take them or leave them. Call me up when they go." Cathewe propped himself with his pillows and stared at the telephone for a full half hour; and when the telephone finally rang again, the hair on his forehead was damp. "Well?" he said.

"Not a whimper. One year, with a twenty per cent. raise, and they seemed glad to sign. In a couple of months—if the print-paper holds out—we'll be carrying money to the banks."

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"I'll be with you at four."

Cathewe set the telephone down with a bang, kicked the bedclothes high into the air, turned a somersault and landed with a thud on the floor. He picked himself up, laughing, flung his bathrobe across his shoulders, and dashed down the hall to the bathroom. It was only half after nine, but that did not matter.

His mother heard the racket and called upstairs: "Sonny?"

"Ye-ah!"

"What has happened!"

"The millennium! . . . Ha-a-a!"—as the cold water from the shower struck his muscular shoulders.

She listened for a few minutes, heard a dozen "has" and "hos" and "brrrs," laughed softly, and went into the kitchen to prepare the madman's breakfast. He was tremendously elated over something. He took his blows quietly; but when he was happy he had to dance, go joy-berserker, as he called it.

"I've won, mother," he said, as he came storming into the dining room, his eyes glistening and his fine skin ruddy. "God bless the Anglo-Saxon race, with its love of fair play! That's what did it. And the war had something to do with it, too. This war is really making us think and act. Four

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" Cathewe saw Betty frequently. Sometimes he saw her entering or leaving a fashionable shop; sometimes she was in her limousine . . . She persisted in entering every dream he had. '

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or five years ago the dear people would have let me go to the wall without a flutter. Now they come out and drive the advertisers back. It has taken me nearly three years to drive home a single fact—that I am honest. Think of it! The most puzzling, tantalizing, quicksilvery thing on earth—the public—went out and won this fight for me because they saw I was playing fair! We can let out a few reefs in our sails from now on. God bless 'em! And yet!"—sobering.

"Well, and yet?"

"I couldn't have held out but for——"

"Sonny, we've threshed that out long ago. The means to a noble end. Dismiss any doubt. God understands. He knows what is in your heart. My boy!—to bring a people into a promised land, or as near to it as it is humanly possible to bring them!"

"Queer sheep that they are, they would turn against me to-morrow, if they knew! Mother, I'm being watched. I can't prove it, but I sense it continually. I ought to make my trip to New York, but I don't dare. Mansfield has just received a bitter blow to his prestige. He's not going to leave any stone unturned to do me injury. But, oh, lady, in a little while I'll not have to touch a dollar that isn't ours—think of it! Not a picture on the wall, not a chair, not a nail in the house

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that is not honestly ours. Your little nest-egg made it possible. What a glorious woman you are! And all our dreams coming true!"

"'To thine ownself be true, and it must follow as night the day. . . .'"

But he smothered the rest of the quotation with a kiss. "And now for another battle. I'm going after that munitions plant. I'm going to force him to fix that water supply. There is something sinister in the way the Federal inspectors ignore that water system. I dare not accuse any one of taking bribes; but there seems to be a big cloud of dust out there whenever the inspector shows up. If a fire got loose out there, that part of the town would be blown off the map, many killed, and hundreds made homeless. So I'm going to get busy. And now, by cracky, I'm going to pile into that book! I haven't felt so like work in a month of moons."

He ate his breakfast hurriedly, then bolted into the study. For a little while she could hear him humming some bars from the Second Polonaise; then silence. Thereafter she and the maid moved about their work without sound.

He wrote steadily until three; then he went to the office to consult with the business manager, who still exhibited an hysterical condition of the mind.

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"Not one of 'em kicked at the new rate. They seemed tickled to death for the privilege of paying it. But our old friend will be sailing some kind of a bomb into camp before long. He isn't the kind to lie down after a jolt like this. What pleases me is the fact that *we* didn't do the job; our subscribers did it. Huh? Think of that, when you write the history of the town of Bannister. And yet they'd bolt the other way if the right thing turned up."

"The right thing for Mansfield. What would that be?" asked Cathewe.

"Search me. But let him throw his bomb. We're the best little ol' ball-players on the circuit. Say, I'll want half your editorial page."

"Welcome."

"Going to make any comment editorially?"

"Not a line. I didn't do this, it was the mighty fine lot of folks who inhabit this town."

"Well, you started 'em thinking, anyhow. You had the grit to hang on."

"Grit? You wouldn't call it that, would you, you being the one man in this office who is aware of the resources of the paper?"

"Well"—rather weakly—"it takes grit to lose twenty or thirty thousand and not throw bricks. You can't get away from the fact, chief, that you've given this burg a real newspaper for he-

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men. Folks know it, and that's why the ads have come ki-ooting back. Of course, you've had to take me into your confidence to a certain extent, but I'm an oyster. You're right. If folks knew the backing you've got, they might set up the yell of Wolf. You never can tell. But once we get going past these bumps, you'll be able to come out into the open. Sheep."

"My opinion," Cathewe agreed, starting for the editorial stairs.

The keen-eyed business manager stared at Cathewe's back until it vanished beyond the landing.

"My middle name is Obfuscated, sure pop. What the dickens *is* his game, anyhow? All that cash in the bank, and never a copper for himself? Oh, well; I should worry about George W. Future"; and he applied himself to the advertising diagram for the next day's paper.

Cathewe left the office at five o'clock. It was growing dark. He always walked home, even in bad weather.

Bannister was like all American cities of its kind—spotted, you might say. Oases of fine homes set in the middle of riff-raff dwellings; three or four nice streets, then three or four shabby ones. Polygon Hill, of course, stood aloof from the town proper. The aristocracy lived there

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and took good care that cheap residences did not encroach.

Cathewe had to cross one of these shabby sections on his way home. He always walked swiftly, rarely observant of outward things. He walked because he found this character of action provocative of clear thinking. His mind was full of his story, and he was eager to get at it again an hour or so before he returned to the office. Most people, who think as they walk, do so with heads tilted forward. Cathewe walked with his chin up—the swinging gait of a man who could see his objective.

It was dark, but still a little too early for the street lamps. The darkness was partly due to the heavy rainclouds that were sweeping across the sky. Obliquely he saw two men across the street apparently talking to a woman. What made him turn his head and look squarely he never knew. Ordinarily, he would have continued on. This single look was enough. He broke into a run. When he arrived he did not ask questions. He knocked one of the men flat and whirled the other into the gutter.

"Can I be of assistance?" he said, turning to the woman. Then he saw who it was. "Miss Mansfield? What in the world are you doing alone in this quarter of the town? Here, take my

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arm." He did not wait for her to offer it but instantly tucked it through his arm and marched up the street, never turning his head to see what the rowdies were doing. "My home is only a few blocks away. I'll call a taxi and you can have a cup of tea while you wait."

"If you please! I . . . I'm rather upset. One of them touched me." Cathewe stopped. "No, no! Please do not go back. My chauffeur must have misunderstood my directions, for I left him by the curb here."

"I'm glad I happened along."

"So am I."

And they started on again. She became a little breathless trying to measure her stride with his. How strong and muscular his arm was! The suddenness of his appearance and the ruthless manner in which he had knocked those ruffians about! His home: she found herself curiously excited at the thought of seeing his home. The lamps were now popping up along the street, and shyly she stole a glance at him. To-day he was dressed like any other city man; perhaps a little more tastefully than the general run. How oddly he held his head, as if he were looking over the tops of things. Well, to-night she would learn who he was.

She had been oddly intrigued by the thought of

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him since that adventure on the hilltop. Why? Because he read Fabre in the original and hadn't offered to shake hands? He was a type the like of which she had never met before; that was probably the reason for the sustained interest in him. Perhaps, after all, she was only reaching about a little blindly for some amusement which would make her forget the hurt in her heart.

The click of his heels on the sidewalk roused Cathewe to the fact that presently she might wonder at his silence.

"How is Sandy?"

"Very well, thank you. And how is Messer the Ant?"

"Haven't disturbed him since that day. I suppose you were on a charity visit. Never visit those quarters without at least your dog."

"I was never spoken to or annoyed before. I did stay a little longer than usual."

He became tongue-tied again. Perhaps he should have taken her into the nearest drugstore and called the taxi from there. Home, she would be sure to learn that the editor of the *Herald* and Brandon Cathewe were one and the same.

"I say, it might expedite things if I called the taxi from the drugstore there."

"But there wouldn't be any tea there!" She was determined to see how this unusual young man lived.

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It struck him with the bang of thunder that she might be playing with him. But the idea no sooner took lodgment in his mind than he dismissed it as utterly absurd. She wasn't that kind.

The meeting had been fortunate in one respect: he had rescued her from a disagreeable encounter. But it wrote misfortune for him. It was inevitable that to-morrow she would know the truth, that the man at her side was he who had recently pilloried her father, held him up to scorn. Automatically he lengthened his stride.

"Do I have to run the rest of the way?" she panted.

"I beg your pardon!" he cried, slowing down.

"There, that's better." She laughed.

"My boots are seven-leaguers."

"I always walk rapidly when I'm thinking rapidly."

This comment gave him extra food for thought. "Perhaps I had the tea-kettle in mind."

"A whistling tea-kettle—what cheery things they are!"

"How many lumps of sugar?"—whimsically.

"Two."

"Cream or lemon?"

"Lemon."

"If you won't mind ordinary grocery tea, and a

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little white clapboard house with a picket fence in front."

"I shall be very grateful for a chair and a cup of tea."

"Here we are," he said, swinging the gate.

She passed him, leaving a vague perfume. There was no coherent thought in his head beyond the knowledge that he was still thrilling from the recent touch of her arm against his. He opened the door for her and she stepped into the dark hall.

" 'Sh!" she whispered.

And quite unconsciously her hand found his arm and rested rather tensely there. Music, from the darkened room beyond, glorious music! A strange silence followed. Then the music began again—the Arab Dance by Grieg. The player, however, did not finish it.

"Is that you, Sonny?"

What a pleasant voice! thought the girl, her astonishment at full tide.

"Yes, mother. Will you ring for lights and tea? I have company—Miss Mansfield, whose chauffeur misunderstood her instructions."

The girl heard a flurry of skirts in the room beyond, the tinkle of a bell, and then in a kind of dream Betty entered the living room.

"Can you see the lounge?" he asked.

"Yes."

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Almost at once the maid came in with a Roman candelabrum, which she placed on the piano.

"You'll excuse me a moment," said Cathewe, "while I call the taxi"; and he stepped into the hall.

"How beautifully you play!" said Betty. But her thought was: "How beautiful you are!" His mother.

Oh, certainly there was a real mystery here. Her glance swept the room, which was small. Treasures everywhere, and taste.

"Would you like to hear something more?" asked the white-haired woman standing by the piano. So this was the girl!—here, in this house! Lovely; Sonny was right.

"Oh, if you would be so good!"

"Do you like brilliant music?"

"I like anything that *is* music."

So Mrs. Cathewe sat down again and played Grieg's Papillon—played it without taking her gaze off this flower-like young woman; and Betty felt powerless to shift her eyes. She had entered an enchanted castle, and the mystic inhabitants had laid a spell upon her. Brahms, Moszkowski, Rubenstein, Tschaikowsky, Scharwenka; the melodies seemed to rush and whirl about her, caress, confuse, startle, soothe. She was indeed under a spell; for the effect of fine music upon certain emotional souls is hypnotic. Betty had heard

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nearly all the great pianists in Europe; it had been a part of her education; but to be played to directly, in this amazing fashion, left her with but two senses—seeing and hearing. She was not conscious of moving. Did she drink a cup of tea? She could not remember. She recollected nothing until the door of the taxicab slammed behind her. Then normality returned with a rush. For the second time that young man had avoided giving his name. What in the world could be the meaning of it?

The cab had not gone a dozen yards when she rapped on the window.

"Stop!" she ordered. "Do you know the name of those people?"

"No, Miss," the driver lied blandly.

Betty peered from the side window, and received a distinct shock. Why, this Ali Baba's cave was almost opposite Nancy's! Nancy knew them; she must know them. She must have known that September day. It wasn't possible that Nancy had not come into contact with that young man and his mother. It was plain that Nancy had not told the truth. Why?

She became determined to solve this riddle. There wasn't any sense to it. The moment she arrived home she was astonished to note that it was seven. She had been in that quaint house al-

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most two hours. She ran to the telephone and called a number.

"Dr. Maddox, please." She had to wait a minute.

"Hello!"

"This is Betty Mansfield, Doctor."

"Your father ill?"

"No. Nobody's ill. I've a question to ask. Who lives in that little white house across the street from you—the house with the picket fence?"

"Why?"

"I want to know."

"There are four or five white houses across the street."

"Thanks!" With an indignant gesture she set the receiver on the hook.

But all through the evening she wondered why she had not pressed the question, what freakish impulse had compelled her to ring off in that childish manner. Was there an undercurrent of fear? Fear of what?—that, once the truth was hers, the white door would be closed to her forever? A mystery which nobody wanted her to solve. She reached in all directions, but there was no connecting link.

Cathewe usually remained at his desk until the paper was ready for the press, which was about three o'clock in the morning. But to-night at

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twelve he turned the office over to the night-editor. He wanted to get out of doors, walk. His head was full of the girl. He could not dismiss the vivid picture of her. Whichever way he looked he saw her sitting tense upon the lounge, against a background of Rembrandt tones, her beautiful face wonder-lit. He knew what had happened to her, for often it had happened to him. His mother's playing had hypnotized her. But he knew what the girl would never know: that his mother had deliberately set out to sweep Betty off her feet, to create a fascination which would survive the hour. And the subsequent, abstracted manner of the girl convinced him that his mother had succeeded only too well.

"Why did you play like that?" he had asked after Betty's departure.

"For your sake."

"Mine?"

"Yes. I want her to remember *me* as against the day when she learns who you are, Sonny. She has a soul like a harp. I can see that. When the evil hour comes—as it must—she will not be able to condemn you utterly. It *is* a muddle, isn't it, Sonny? But God will clear it up for us."

Cathewe's long stride carried him to his own gate. He was in the act of opening it when a pistol shot cut through the silence sharply.

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CHAPTER XIII

CATHEWE broke into a run toward the rear of the house. His reasoning was sound. He saw a man dash from the kitchen and make for the back fence. There was no way of cutting him off, but there was a chance of putting a hand on him before he could scale the high board fence. Cathewe touched the man's coattail, but futilely. Recognizing the uselessness of pursuit, he swung around and ran back to the house, entering through the kitchen door.

"Mother?" he called, thundering through the kitchen into the dining room. "Mother?"

"Yes, Sonny! I'm all right," came from his study.

He found her in his chair, the light on. She was pale but calm. He caught her head in his hands and kissed her. And she smiled.

"I fired only to frighten him. He was rifling your safe. He made no effort to touch me. Was there anything of value there?"

"Only odds and ends of manuscripts and my dramatic contracts. This is Mansfield. That money in the bank is bothering him. He begins

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to feel that he must find out. But I must go to New York to-morrow night, even if I'm followed. I dare not delay my going any longer."

"You are going through with it?"

"Yes."

"In spite of the girl?"

"In spite of her. Don't worry about me, mother. I've got to forget that I'm human. I have dedicated my life to a cause. There's no escape now. What a marvel you are, though! Most women would have screamed and fainted."

"I was thinking of you, Sonny. Shall I get you something to eat? There is coffee on the back of the range. It will be strong. Did you see the man's face?"

"No."

"I did. But I don't suppose I'll ever have the chance to identify it. . . . There goes the bell!"

"Probably the patrolman."

Cathewe offered him a cup of coffee; and the three of them sat around the kitchen table.

"Never kept money in that safe, did you?"

"No," answered Cathewe. "Manuscripts, mostly, and receipted household bills."

"Uh-huh. Some guy found you come home at three in the morning. Took a chance. No silver missing?"

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Mrs. Cathewe shook her head.

"Any good yegg could open that safe without 'soup.' You got a good look at him?"

Mrs. Cathewe proceeded to describe the man rather minutely. The expression of professional interest on the patrolman's face changed slowly to one of distress.

"I'd let the matter drop," he said.

"Clary, which are you for?" Cathewe demanded.

"What do you mean?"

"Are you for Mansfield or for Bannister?"

"Bannister, Mr. Cathewe. But for all that, my job is my bread and butter. You're a white man, and this burg is beginning to wake up to the fact. What your mother's just told me resembles a man I know. But if I told you who, I wouldn't be able to sell a newspaper on any corner in town. You know the Department as well as I do. You're up against a real war. You'll never get anything on Mansfield that'll hold water in court. He's no fool. And it's history in this town that when he starts out to get a man, he gets him. He'll get you."

"Not in the sense you mean, Clary. And if anything should happen. . . . " Cathewe shut off the words. What he had been about to say might react against him, should some pro-

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German blow up the munitions plant. "Another cup of coffee?"

"No. I'll be getting back to my beat," said the patrolman, picking up his night-stick. "Good luck to you, anyhow. You want me to report this?"

"Let it drop, since no damage was done. Good-night."

At precisely this moment the telephone rang in Mansfield's library. Mansfield laid aside his book.

"Hello!"

"This Mr. Mansfield?"

"Yes."

"There wasn't anything."

Mansfield hung up the receiver, but he did not reach for the book he had been reading. Instead, he stared into space.

Mansfield, who rarely suffered from mental confusion, whose mind was generally a cold and precise thinking machine, was, and had been for some days, in a most peculiar and baffling state. He recognized, as it were, two individualities in continuous combat. The art of introspection, which had lain dormant all these years for lack of incentive, was becoming keenly active. The roots of his cynicism went deep; and it was this cynicism which constantly fought the ingression of sentiment. Cynicism was always striving to laugh

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away sentimentalism. Alone or among men, cynicism was victorious; but in the presence of Betty's crystal honesty his cynicism strove in vain to carry a bold face. The man of action, of deeds, was slowly disintegrating, giving way before the incomprehensible. A phenomenon walked beside him, but he could not touch it.

It wasn't that Betty was twisting him around her finger. That would have been real weakness. The phase which would not permit of analysis was this: in her presence his sense of justice went out pacifically to meet her demands. Later, alone, his cynicism would lash him into a fury because of this easy surrender or that. But he never went to her with the plea that he had changed his mind. He was a sportsman.

He had formed a new habit—that of wandering about the great shops, alone, unnoticed except by chance; and he was always being drawn toward that section which contained the rows upon rows of crucibles. He liked to stand there, among the white-hot and dazzling containers, and speculate. It was as if he had been poured into a crucible and the result was in doubt.

The truth is, he was trying to fight his way through the gossamer net Betty had thrown about him. He sensed with panic that the fibre which had made him a power in the land was softening.

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Fiercely resolved to make no further concession to her wheedling, he would return home; and then, if Betty wanted something, all she had to do was rumple his hair, tweak his ears, and kiss him. He was helpless because she never asked anything for herself.

Again, his imagination took another turn. He seemed to be walking in a valley of echoes. "Give Betty what she wants." "Give me what I want." "Give Cathewe what he wants." "Give." Maddox.

The thought of Cathewe, however, always had the effect of a tonic upon a man at low ebb. To crush this meddling whippersnapper who had caused him the only humiliation he had known in years, crush and break him and scatter him like dust. Nothing should stand in the way to the accomplishment of this end. Cathewe should pay dearly for his temporary victories. Mansfield perceived that he was perfectly free and unhampered as regarded this project. The *Herald* and its editor were never mentioned in the Mansfield menage. Father and daughter never came into conflict upon this subject; for, by one of those curious twists of fate, they were both working toward the same end, though from opposite directions and with different motives—the undoing of Cathewe.

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Another thing worthy of mention: Betty was making him see the war. It was beginning to grip his imagination. It was enfiltering through the layers of self-interest and indifference. The Germans weren't playing the game like white men: there was a total lack of fair play. And observing this lack of another for the first time, it swung about his point of view subtly. He began to wonder in a detached way if in the past he himself had always played fair. So, nowadays, when he wrote a check for the Belgian Relief or the Red Cross, he no longer meditated what people would say regarding Dunleigh Mansfield's generosity.

So far as Cathewe was concerned, Mansfield considered that he was waging lawful warfare. The initial attack had come from Cathewe; and he had a right to defend himself with whatever weapons were available.

The sum of all these psychological incursions and cogitations was this: Mansfield was giving Betty what she wanted, giving it to her because he loved her and because another phrase of Maddox's was of recurrent quality.

"If you deceive her, and she finds it out, you will lose her."

And he was deceiving her. Maddox had advised him to make a clean breast of it, and he had permitted that opportunity to slip by. This

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deception, however, was neither cynical nor casual; it was based upon a kind of unacknowledged terror. The truth must be kept from her. She must never know that her father was not the demigod she painted him. Of such is the miracle of love.

All this, of course, intensified his hatred of Cathewe. If Betty ever did find out, it would be through Cathewe and his infernal newspaper. So Cathewe should be broken. Not even Betty—had she wanted to—could save the fellow.

But in regard to the girl, he was like a man fascinated by a precipice. Something was continually impelling him toward the brink—toward confession. Not that he had committed anything criminal in the eyes of the law; simply, it was coming home to him that he had played a great game badly, that his power was based upon ruthlessness rather than upon business acumen. He wanted to hold her love; for day by day it grew more precious.

As for Betty, surrounded by these labyrinths of tergiversation, she felt herself confronted by a singular fact. She was being covertly snubbed: Nancy was snubbing her, the doctor (who was the most honest man in the world) was snubbing her, and that mysterious young man and his mother were snubbing her. Possessing a healthy pride, Betty

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dropped the idea of finding out what she craved to know. But she could not dismiss that remarkable pair from her thoughts. They stood out cameo-like against the ordinary shell of Bannister folks. Whenever she was alone and idle, her thought would leap back to that marvellous concert. Indeed, the beauty of the mother haunted her. She often searched the throngs in the street for a glimpse of her, but without success.

There was a disturbing phase, too. Again and again there came an almost irresistible longing to drive into that quiet street, stop at that door and ask for music. Here in America there was so little of it, especially in a small city like Bannister. Hidden away in that side-street was a great pianist, the equal of any man or woman she had ever heard on the concert stages of Europe—an American.

Upon going over the situation with a frank mind, Betty was sure that it would have been easy to dismiss the young man had he not been indissolubly linked with the marvellous woman who was his mother. A young man who read Fabre in the original and whose mother played with the fire of a Paderewski!

It is supposable that one of the main reasons for the continuance of this odd situation was that Betty was lonely. Her hours were frequently

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crowded with action; still she was lonely for the companionships such as she had known in France. With the exception of Nancy—and she could not be with Nancy always—she had no friends such as she could run to with confidence. She had gone to France a child; the young men and women of Bannister were strangers; there were no childhood friendships to renew. The real friendships she had formed were among her schoolmates in France; and now these were scattered over the world.

There was a good deal of give and take socially, but she moved through these affairs amiably aloof. The atmosphere was not particularly congenial. She admired the exuberance and vitality of the American youth, but they lacked the indoor polish of their foreign cousins. Art, music, literature were only approached, not explored; they preferred sports and business. But one attribute stood out clearly, and she gave it homage—their attitude toward women. She soon perceived that upon this attitude the American woman based her freedom of action. Acts which in Europe would be misconstrued were here perfectly understood.

You may be sure they hovered about her as bees the jasmine. If they lacked finish themselves they were not blind to it in others. There was no favourite; she treated them all alike. She permitted them to teach her golf and billiards, and

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in return she gave them tea and danced with them. None of them quite lost his awe of her. She was not only the most beautiful girl in the world: she was one of the richest heiresses in America. She rather disappointed the young women because there was nothing about her to criticise.

Mansfield still kept three or four saddle-horses, and frequently now they two rode into the country in the early morning. Now that she was no longer shy, now that her confidence in him was absolute, she discovered to him the beauty of her mind. "Her beauty is the least of her." He would never forget that phrase, even though his bitterest enemy had made it.

He would never forget one brilliant, frosty morning. They had dismounted at the top of the hill where she had met Cathewe. The brown earth and the rusty boscage and the flashing blue water of the lake evoked in her the desire to sing.

When the last glorious note died away, Mansfield asked in an uncertain voice: "What was that?"

" 'The Swallow'."

"What made you want to sing like that?"

"All this"—with a gesture. "To see grandly is to feel grandly. I love to be up high, to see far horizons. I am wild, Daddy; they never tamed me."

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"Did it ever occur to you that you are taming me?"—smiling.

"Are you wild?" she flashed back at him.

"Sometimes I wonder what I am. Sometimes I wish I could be born over again, just the way you'd like me, to be able to anticipate what you want so I wouldn't have to weigh the pro and con of everything."

"Oh, I shouldn't care to have you perfect. I wouldn't have anything to do, then. I wouldn't have anybody to boss."

Somehow that meant more to him than any other thing—save one—she had ever said. She had uttered it half in jest; but there was something in her eyes that convinced him that if ever a dénouement arrived, she would not be without generosity. What a wonder-child it was!

"It is glorious up here," he said, his gaze sweeping about. "Wonder who moved that flat stone there? Some boy, probably, hunting for ants' nests. The fun of being a boy! Honey, I don't believe I ever really was a boy. Your grandfather was a religious bigot; anything a boy wanted to do was wrong in the eyes of God. Oh, he was generous with material comforts, sent me to college and footed the bills without much grumbling. But I couldn't read novels on Sunday. I couldn't go walking or sparking. I just had to sit around the

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house and go to church three times. I couldn't do anything my boyhood friends did. Why, even Maddox could play baseball on Sunday; and if he doesn't go to Heaven, then it's no place for an honest man!"

Betty laughed joyously. "Poor Daddy!"

"It wasn't funny in those days. I honestly believe it hardened me. I never sowed any wild-oats, so my pent-up resentment never had any outlet. It became petrified."

"Is that a guilty conscience?"

"Have any of us consciences free of guilt?" he countered.

Gravely Betty walked over to the flat stone and touched it with her foot. Was silence deception? Was she actually deceiving her father? Those letters! Was she deceiving her father in regard to them? But they were meant for her eyes alone. It would be sacrilege for a third person to touch them. After all, hiding the letters themselves was not deception. The real deception was that she permitted him to believe her heart-whole and free.

Immediately an odd thing happened to her mentally. Out of the sunshine and the frosty mists came a clear picture. She saw that beautiful mother, her white hair and her serene face touched magically by candlelight: she heard divine music.

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She became afire with the craving to hear it again. A most bizarre resolve laid hold of her. Everything in her, breeding, teaching, tradition, demanded that she dismiss this resolve. Nancy nor her father wanted Betty Mansfield to know that mother and son. The doctor would not have evaded her query without a good reason. And yet, Betty knew instinctively that these were proper people. Moreover, they belonged to that class of intellectuals from which she herself had received her training.

"Mother, this is Miss Mansfield," he had said; but he had not added: "My name is so-and-so."

In her world, persons who preferred to remain unknown acted thus for significant reasons: they did not care to know you or be known. But against this was their charming hospitality. Had they been everyday Bannister folks, she would have passed on and forgotten. The unwritten law of her kind forbade Betty to cross that threshold again. And she was going to cross it that very afternoon.

She knew that the name of the editor of the *Herald* was Brandon Cathewe; but beyond that, nothing. This is easily explained. Wherever she went, that name was tabu. No one ever mentioned either the editor or his newspaper in her presence for fear of offending her. She was

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incurious. The affair which she was forwarding did not necessitate any personal information regarding the editor. For all she cared he might be one of the Boanerges or out of Brobdignag. She had, it is true, drawn a careless mental picture of him—a copy of an editor she had once seen—a wild-eyed, dark-haired, shabby individual of the anarchist type.

"I am ready," she said to her father.

She gathered up the reins and swung herself into the saddle. Mansfield followed, rather startled at the abruptness.

At half after two that afternoon Betty opened the gate and hurried up to the door of the house with the white clapboards. This haste was an urgency of fear—fear that if she hesitated or looked back, she would not dare go on with the mad adventure. She rang the bell and waited.

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CHAPTER XIV

THE housemaid opened the door a little way, cautiously, to make note of the visitor's character. Here in America one had to be careful of the front doors of frame houses. The free lance of business was legion, and full of affable effrontery. The instant the maid recognized Betty, she drew the door full-wide. One did not forget Betty overnight.

As the beautiful adventuress, dazzled by her temerity, stepped across the threshold, the maid closed the hall door and opened that which gave into the living room.

"I veel announce Ma'm'selle. . . ." began the maid in broken English.

"You are French?" interrupted Betty, eagerly, in that beloved tongue.

"But no, Ma'm'selle. I am Belgian. I am a refugee. Monsieur brought me here from New York. I go to summon Madame."

Charity, thought Betty; the finest kind, that permitted the recipient to retain self-respect. A Belgian refugee in Bannister and domiciled in this house of subtle mystery! Somehow this re-

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assured Betty that her instinct was right: these people were to be trusted in spite of the mystery behind which they chose to barricade themselves.

She entered the living room and sat down on the lounge. Her heart wasn't quite right; it refused to behave. In fact, it was thumping in a most disloyal fashion.

Presently she had the courage to look about. The room was brilliant with sunshine, and every article stood out clearly and invitingly. She had not been able to observe very well that memorable evening in the candlelight. She became amazed; and this amazement, carrying away all personal thought, had the welcome effect of lessening her heart-beats.

Treasures. The Chinese rug on the floor was antique; probably the only one of its kind in this part of the world. On the mantel over the fireplace was a peachblow vase. Not an ordinary piece of furniture, not a second-rate painting. Not even in her own home, the finest on Polygon Hill, were there antiques which approached these in beauty and quality. Here, in a little ordinary clapboard house! Who *could* they be and what had brought them to Bannister?

Beyond the rosewood piano—the spread was a rare bit of Japanese silk tapestry, rivalling in colour the Polish rugs—on the wall was a series of

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photographs. From where she sat she could see that they were all autographed, and two of the photographs she recognized—Rubenstein's and Paderewski's. After all, there was nothing astonishing in this. It was perfectly reasonable that two such great musicians should pay homage to another who was quite their equal. But what was not reasonable was that this equal should be hidden away in an obscure street in an obscure town.

Footsteps on the stairs. Betty stood up just as the subject of these cogitations entered the room. The hostess came forward with both hands outstretched, with a frankly amused smile on her lips.

"I know," she began at once. "You have come back for some music."

"I feel so ashamed! I don't know, but I believe you have hypnotized me. I wasn't invited to come again."

"Indeed you were," replied the musician.

"I was?" —delighted.

"I do not play for strangers ordinarily; and I did play for you."

"Why?"

"Because you know how to feel, because you have a soul which responds to beauty, whether it be a picture or a sound." Mrs. Cathewe led the girl to the chair Sonny occupied when she played

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for him. "Sit here where I can see you while I play. What is your mood?"

"My mood? I don't exactly know. Perhaps I'm a little sad," said Betty. "And I am still bewildered over my boldness."

"In surrendering to a fine craving? Nonsense! You will always be welcome. Come any time when you feel the mood."

"May I ask you one question?"—timidly.

Mrs. Cathewe hesitated the fraction of a second. "Ask it."

"Have you ever performed in public?"

With a sigh of relief Mrs. Cathewe answered: "When I was eighteen I made my début in Vienna. But I was not a success. I was one of those unfortunate persons whose nerves go to pieces before large audiences. I had ambition, but I lacked that incentive which conquers nervousness—the dread of poverty. It is peculiar, isn't it, that truly great artists always come from that background. Bread and butter and genius; and I never had to want for bread and butter."

She struck the opening bars of Mendelssohn's "Capriccio." She possessed that marvellous faculty of playing without apparently watching the keys. What a beautiful child it was! Poor Sonny, with that remarkable insight to character which was

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his, he had read this girl aright the first time. She was desirable.

To win her friendship this day against that when, inevitable as it must be, the girl learned the truth, that Sonny was right and her father was wrong. To give her comparisons by which to judge. And what manner of father was it who could not throw ambition to the winds before the altar of such perfect womanhood? As she approached the finale of the "Capriccio," she struck a discord. Sonny! She had forgotten. He was in his study at work, and he ought never to be disturbed. And he would be wondering what all this was about, enter, and spoil his mother's little plot. She began the "Spinnerlied." She followed this with selections from Brahms, Grieg, Chopin, Rubenstein, and Rachmaninoff. Then she dropped her hands to her lap.

"You are very wonderful," said Betty. "How do you remember them all without a note in front of you?"

"It cost a good deal of hard work. You are very wonderful, too."

Mrs. Cathewe left the seat and knelt before the music case, a piece of beautiful Florentine marquetry. Presently she held up a sheet of music so that Betty could see the title. It was one of Wolf-Ferrarri's exquisite songs.

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"Do you know that?"

"Why . . . why, yes!"

"Will you sing it for me?"

"I'll try to, if you'll play the accompaniment."

Her voice was naturally a little husky and uncertain at first, but after the third attempt she found herself calm and confident; and her sweet, high soprano filled the room. It was not simply a good voice well trained. It had fire, colour, tenderness; it was the girl herself, what she was in spirit. She sang three other songs; and then Mrs. Cathewe got up and impulsively seized the girl by the arms.

"You are a nightingale! With your beauty and that voice, you could set the world on fire."

"I am not ambitious. I lack the incentive, too. Sometimes I sing for charity; but otherwise I never appear in pulbic. I sing for the same reason you play—because I love to."

"Will you have tea?"

"No, no! I must be going. If only you could understand what pleasure you have given me! May . . . may I come again some day?"

"Come whenever you feel like it. I am nearly always here."

And then the mother of Sonny performed one of those acts which artistic souls alone have the courage to perform. She caught the girl in her

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arms and embraced her; and Betty was pleased, thrilled, astonished. The variant emotions rippled over her face as a light breeze ripples over the surface of a stream.

With their arms locked they proceeded to the door.

"I think," said Betty, gravely, "that you are just glorious!"

Then she ran down the steps to the gate, which she sent behind her with a click. Mrs. Cathewe remained in the doorway until Betty reached the corner; then she closed the door and walked thoughtfully toward the study. She noticed that the door was open the space of a hand. She pushed in to find Cathewe with his head on his arms. She stooped and kissed his neck.

"What am I going to do, mother?" he said, without stirring.

"I don't know, Sonny. I am falling in love with her myself. I had no idea she could sing like that. I am very glad she came as she did—just to hear me play."

"Are you sure that was the reason?" Cathewe sat up.

"Absolutely sure."

"You did not give the name?"

"She did not ask for it. I am very sorry for her, too. When she finds out who you are, there will

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be doubts. She is odd, this child. She has been reared in a particularly fine manner. When the hour comes she will put her father on one side of the scales and you and me on the other. She is of the sort who are terribly just—like the French who brought her up. She *is* French. She has absorbed the nationality of that people. She is trying to be an American. I believe she is very lonely here. My poor Sonny! What a terrible mistress Honour is! She is like that Nuremburg Maid: she tortures you when she embraces you."

"I'll see it through."

"Is he so bad?"

"The man who opened my safe did so at the orders of Mansfield. From your description and the patrolman's frank dismay, I at once had my suspicions. I confirmed them. The man was a plain-clothes detective from the police-station. What is the inference? That Mansfield's sinister influence there has made the police blind and inefficient. The amazing fact in American politics is this: a single man holds a town in the hollow of his hand. He can order this and that to be done, and it is done. Simply because he orders it. He says that this or that man shall be elected or broken. It is done. Now, this man's power is not based upon anything but habit, remarkable as that statement may seem. He could be

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overthrown by a turn of the hand. And the reason this hand is never turned is a human reason: Human beings find it easier to be inefficient than to be efficient. Many of the men who commit these acts under command are honest according to their lights. They consider that their moral obligations are to the boss rather than to the town. I am trying to convince the people in Bannister that a boss is lichen, fungus, worthless and useless. A King will hang on to his crown no matter how bloody his feet may be. So it is with the American political boss. Mansfield has the police and fire department in the hollow of his hand; he dictates to the common council, to the State Senators and the Assemblymen, simply because a boss is a boss, and the American public has really never attempted to analyze his power. He secured his street-car franchise for nothing, for merely improving the street through which his cars run. This rank exemption from taxation compels the people to pay extra heavily; and in that direction there is no redress, for the franchise extends to ninety-nine years. He owns the controlling interest in the other newspapers, and that is why I have to stand alone. He's done petty and mean things in business. You remember that poor inventor. There are many instances like that. He owns property all over town, but only the fine

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buildings are recorded in his name. And I'm going to knock his crown from his head . . . and give up the girl I love. I've *got* to. I created this situation, and there is nothing for me but to follow through."

"And you will win."

"If Mansfield doesn't find out my secret too soon. . . . There's the bell."

It was Nancy. She came in, bright of eye and rosy-cheeked.

"Mother Cathewe, I've come to take you for a ride."

"And Mother Cathewe will be delighted to go. I'll run up and change."

"You're like a breath of air from the hills, Nancy," said Cathewe, as he sat down on the lounge beside the visitor.

But Nancy did not return his smile.

"Consciences are nuisances, aren't they?" she began.

"What's yours bothering you about?"—lightly.

"It's been calling out loud for several days, Brand. I'm a thief. Oh, it doesn't matter that what I actually took was a trifle. I stole also a secret to which I had no right."

"Well, let's hear the confession. Editors and priests and family physicians all are in the same category."

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"Editors?"

"Yes, Nancy. A lot of secrets come into my office that never go out."

"Well, then, a few days ago I came in to take your mother out, and while she was upstairs dressing I saw your study door open."

"I see. I suppose I'll have to cut off your head and hang it up in the closet. You found out I was George Cottar?"

"Yes, I feel dreadfully about it."

"Nonsense! It doesn't matter, or it won't matter, once I'm through this Mansfield fight. But I didn't miss anything."

"I took a rejected sheet out of the waste-basket and carried it off."

"Scandalous!" He laughed. "Keep it. Some-day I'll autograph it for you, if you care."

"I may keep it?"—eagerly.

"With the clearest conscience in the world."

"But why a nom de plume?"

"Oh, I never dreamed I would be successful. When I finished that first novel, I just tacked George Cottar to it and shipped it off. My publishers still believe my name to be Cottar. You'll keep the secret for a little while longer?"

"As long as you want me to. You've been just splendid about it. I just walked into your study without the least thought about the pro-

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priety of the act. An author, right across the street!"

"I tell you what, Nancy. Some afternoon I'll run over and read you what I've got done of a new book. You've got such good judgment, I'd like your opinion."

Nancy became radiant. And there entered his heart a sudden distaste of life. If only it had been this girl instead! For Nancy was just as fine and lovable as Betty. It was merely an accident that he loved the latter instead of the former.

"Brand, what did she want?"

"Want? Who?"

"Betty. I saw her leave just as I opened the garage doors."

"She came on one of those singular impulses to which we all surrender at times. Mother, in a manner peculiarly her own, has fascinated Miss Mansfield. She came to hear mother play. And Lordy, you never told me she could sing like that! She didn't see me. I stuck to the study and didn't come out until you rang."

"She doesn't know, then?"

"No."

"Brand, it's a tragedy!"

"In more ways than one, Nancy. By the way, have you got that sheet of manuscript with you?" he broke off.

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She gave it to him. He went into the study and returned shortly. Across the face of the manuscript he had written: "From George Cottar to Nancy Maddox, his friend."

"Thanks. What beautiful script you write!"

"That's because I'm fussy. When I cross out a word, I generally throw the sheet away. A scandalous waste of paper, but I can't help it. Here's that mother o' mine."

When she returned home, Nancy ran straight to her room, turned on the light, and got out that precious page of manuscript. "From George Cottar to Nancy Maddox, his friend." Having possessed a guilty conscience regarding the theft of the sheet, she had not dared scrutinize it heretofore. She had been ashamed to take it out of the drawer. But now she had a right. So she read the page through, and presently was struck by the curious method by which Cathewe concluded his sentences. A little cross, resembling an x. Now, what did that stir in her mind? A cross, resembling the little x. But the riddle remained unsolved.

That night a new phase of the drama unrolled. Cathewe was at his desk as usual, reading some proofs. The real-estate reporter—truthfully, the cub, for the markets and real-estate were his regular assignments, these jobs being the bill of fare

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of all cubs on provincial newspapers—came in rather breathlessly.

"Mr. Cathewe, I've stumbled on the rip-bang-ingest yarn you ever heard tell on."

"What's happened?" asked Cathewe, cordially. He did not hold to the tradition that to make a reporter out of a cub one had to scare him to death first.

"Well, I came to you because it concerns Mansfield."

"Ah!"

"Know those tenements and shacks down by his mills?"

"Yes. Supposed to be owned by Colvin, but in reality owned by Mr. Mansfield. Go on."

"And those unsavory apartments on Melville Street?"

Cathewe nodded. "Also owned by Mansfield."

"Well, the sale of them was recorded with the clerk this afternoon."

"Who purchased them?"

"Miss Mansfield!"

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CHAPTER XV

CATHEWE rocked in his swivel chair for a moment.

"Mr. White," he said, frankly, "I don't want this repeated to a soul. This is a personal affair between Mansfield and his daughter."

"But the whole town will hear of it—selling property to his daughter through a dummy," protested the cub, who saw his aureola vanishing in the distance.

"There's a light on the affair that you would naturally miss. The town will miss it, too. I have neither the time nor the inclination to go into details. To you and to others it looks as if Mansfield were rooking his daughter. No. It's a good story, but we can't use it. Never be afraid to come directly to me when you've got a good yarn. Not a word to any one, mind you." And with a pleasant nod he dismissed the disappointed cub.

Cathewe got up, fired his pipe, and began pacing, with wisps of smoke whirling and twisting behind him. His door being open as usual, those in the city room, where the reporters do their writing, saw him flash past the door and return at

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least twenty times before he ceased to appear. This generally signified that the chief was up in the air over something. And so he was. He had just received a bit of news that had shaken him profoundly, for he perfectly understood the meaning of it.

He knew that Betty Mansfield had a large independent fortune of her own. Still, she would never have bought those pieces of property without consulting her father. Rooking his daughter? No. The savage irony of it! Mansfield had let her spend two or three hundred thousand of her own money because he had not dared confess to her that he was the real proprietor of those blisters on the face of a fair city. Why had he not dared? What else might it be except that he now loved her and wanted desperately to hold her? But what indescribable phase of myopia had prevented him from coming out into the open and giving the property to her to do with as she pleased? A keen brain like Mansfield's, to permit his feet to stray into a bog like this! The first lie, the second, and then the swarming legions.

Cathewe laid his pipe on his desk and crossed over to a window from which he stared at the November stars. He wondered how Mansfield had failed to see how the town would interpret this equivocal sale of property. The ironmonger

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was disliked so heartily that folks would be only too happy to attribute the worst to him, that of mulcting his daughter of her personal fortune. And it was inevitable that she should find out some day. One thing was clear: the child Mansfield had sent away so as not to be bothered with her was winning him and turning the glance of his eyes inward. This predatory and paternal Ingomar was in love at last. And this love was obfuscating his perspectives. A temporary stay in the court of fate.

He began to feel sorry for Mansfield, for he saw what Mansfield was soon to lose. With a crystal soul like Betty's, love must have its foundation upon respect. Tear this away, and the whole edifice must topple.

What effect had those letters upon her? he wondered. Had she kept them or torn them up? Had they intrigued her or only amused her? Would events ever reach that point where a solution to the mystery would arrive? What a voice! Supposing he wrote to her again? On the following night he would be in New York. He could mail the letter from there. And perhaps Nancy would note the effect, or his mother, if Betty came again to hear her play. But what was the use? Circumstance had put him beyond the pale.

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At three o'clock that morning he stole up the path to the Maddox front door and pushed a letter through the slot. And the doctor read this remarkable letter while at the breakfast table:

. . . . I honestly feel sorry for him. I'm waging war against him, yes, but I'm waging it above board. You go to him and urge him to confess about this real-estate transaction. Impress upon him that the town will interpret the deal as a desire on his part to absorb his daughter's fortune. I am quite confident that he now loves her, but it is evident that he has lost his balance. Keep me out of it, of course. I could use this weapon with profound effect—if I were a first-rate scoundrel. But I want to play the game on the square. Go to him as soon as you can.

Maddox carried the letter in his pocket for three days before rediscovering it. On the morning of the third day, when he found and reread it, he announced to his family to have the patients wait. He was going on an errand and would not be back until ten.

He got into his rattling chariot and steered for Polygon Hill. He caught Mansfield just as the latter was starting out for the mills.

"Dunleigh, I want a little talk with you; ten or fifteen minutes. Vital, if you want to know."

"All right, John. Come into the study." Arriving there, Mansfield indicated a chair. "Well, what's on your mind?"

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"I want you to read this letter, Dunleigh. I'm breaking a confidence, but I think it best that you get an unbiased point of view."

When Mansfield returned the letter his face was gray.

"John, it is too late."

"I warned you."

"I know. But what can I do?"

"Tell her."

"And lose her!"

"There is a chance if you tell her; there is none if you don't. Murder will out. And there's another point. You've called this young chap a scoundrel. He is an honest man. He is not after you personally, as that letter proves. He is after you publicly. The clerk of deeds will talk. He knows. In a week or two it will be all over town."

"John, the money Betty paid for that property goes back into it two-fold. I told her she could buy them and I would rebuild. On the day the last shingle goes on I intend to return to her her check. Just now she insists that her money shall do the buying. I wanted to please her. I simply couldn't tell her part of my income for years has been from those . . . those places. We drove around town one day, and she told me what she wanted to do for Bannister; and I gave

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her a free hand. Her money is hers without restrictions. She can have anything and everything——"

"But the truth. And that, Dunleigh, means more to her than a thousand millions. Here's a way out. She wanted to go to France. Let her go; and while she's over there, clean up this mess."

"But she's got over that idea. She believes that Bannister needs her. She's also got the idea that soon we'll be in war, and her duty lies here. I'd let her go to France in a minute. I made my mistake in bringing her here."

"No; the mistake lies in the fact that you brought her back blind. Now, what are you going to do about Cathewe?"

"Break him!" Mansfield brought his fist down upon his desk. "Break him! I am iron there. I'll tell you why." And he recounted the episode on board the giant Cunarder in 1912.

As he listened to this almost incredible tale the doctor's heart went down, down. So this was it! The boy loved Betty, had come here to win her, and his anger against Mansfield's malefactions had switched him on to another trail. Nancy! Gentle and merry and kindly. . . . Nancy whom his keen, paternal eyes read like a book; his daughter! Out of all these curious actions and reactions hers would be the broken heart.

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He put Cathewe's letter away and got up. "Dunleigh, you're going to lose your fight. You're going to lose your daughter, too. You have chosen tortuous labyrinths when a clear, straight path was in front of you! Well, my patients are waiting. I'll bid you good morning."

"John, what shall I do?"

"Tell her, man; tell her why you played such a farce as this real-estate deal. Tell her it was because you feared to lose her. Tell her the truth. Tell her that for years you've lived for and by yourself, a monument to selfishness. Tell her you took rents from the plague districts because you'd lost the perspectives of morality. That you never cared who rented those flats and apartments so long as the rents were forthcoming. Tell her you've taken money from honest men through legal trickery. Tell her that you had forgotten her mother. Lord, Lord! Don't you know that women always forgive, if you *tell* them; that they never forgive if the story comes to them from a third person? You've got the idea that you must cringe. Tell her with your chin up. If you've got to lose her, lose her like a sportsman"; and the indignant Maddox rushed out of the study and out of the house.

Mansfield, with rather a childish burst of fury against the tides of fate that were closing in upon

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him, stalked to the study door and locked it. How many times did he stride from the fireplace to the far wall and back? A hundred times—two, three hundred times.

Until this hour he had looked upon the real-estate deal with a kind of dry humour. When the hour came he would refund Betty's outlay. Wasn't that enough? What business was it of Bannister's? Wasn't he giving her what she wanted, no matter how much it went against the grain? Weren't contractors this very day excavating for a pipe-line from the city main that would make the munitions plant as safe as the downtown district? Maddox was an old fool.

Betty telephoned that she would have luncheon at the Red Cross Headquarters, so her father had to dine alone. It was just as well. He was in that quality of mood that prefers isolation. At the office that afternoon he found fault with everything and everybody, which was so unusual that a rumour quietly circulated that he had lost heavily on some war stock.

And always somewhere in the woodpile was that fellow Cathewe. How often he regretted that day when, instead of attempting to play a saturnine joke, he might have turned the young fool over to the deck-steward and ended the affair then and there.

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He dropped into his club at five and decided to dine there. He was still in a towering rage, and he did not care to face the girl's clear eyes until he had himself in hand. But he brought home some new books and a box of candy, which he placed before her door.

He had by this time argued himself into a line of action—with specious arguments whose strength lay in their cumulation. Here he was, trying the best he knew how to clean up the ugly spots, and they insisted upon confronting him with problems he did not want to solve. What mattered it how the end was attained so long as it was attained? What would Bannister have been but for Dunleigh Mansfield? He had brought ships into the harbour and trains into the terminal and decent wages into pay-envelopes.

In every American city of the second class there are districts which were but are no longer fashionable. The volatile nature of the American creates one district after another, as his prosperity advances. There is very little sentiment in his system in regard to his habitation. He wants the best; and as his fortunes permit, he moves.

Maddox, however, was not of this breed. In the house in which he lived his grandfather—a fresh-water sailor—had been his father and himself

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born. It was of limestone, weather-worn to a pale gray. Millions would not have lured him to Polygon Hill. In the great lakes district there are thousands like it. Square and commodious, the Maddox home was set in a grove of maple and elm and beech. The barn was also of limestone. The loft, once smelly with clover and timothy, was now filled with a jumble of carriages. The ground floor had been turned into a garage only when Maddox was convinced that hurry-call patients would have a better chance if he relied upon engines and gasoline.

Maddox had a good income, but it was an income for which he had to labour continuously. He made about fifteen thousand a year and gave away half. He was careless, too, not in his obligations to others but regarding theirs to him. He never pressed for payment. He was the despair of Nancy, who kept the books; she never knew what to depend upon.

He stopped the ancient chariot at the stepping stone and climbed out. He hoped there wouldn't be any patient in the office. He did not want to see tongues or feel of pulses. His own heart was in agony.

Nancy! He had not studied human beings all these years for nothing. Nancy loved that boy. She might not be absolutely aware of it.

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And now her heart was going to be bruised beyond healing; and her father, physician though he was, could not help her. Oh, he knew the child. When the blow fell she would hold her chin up. She would go on with the routine of life without giving any sign to the world. Not even her mother would suspect. But alone in her room—those heart-tearing sobs she would hide and smother in her pillow!

So that was it! The secret was out. Cathewe loved Betty, and had come to Bannister upon what normal men would have called a forlorn hope—to make himself a force in Bannister. And he had, in face of great odds; and at the same time dug a gulf the width of the Atlantic between himself and Betty Mansfield. A tender, whimsical, chivalrous madman, under the velvet a curious hardness; relentless. And yet he could indirectly warn Mansfield of the danger in that real-estate deal!

Maddox raked his beard fiercely as he hurried up the brick path to the office entrance. The office was vacant. Good! What he wanted just now was a pipe in the study. He would have to mull this affair over and approach it from all angles. But he had scarcely got the coal going when Nancy came in.

"Did you order that awning?"

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"Awning?"

"Heavens, he's forgotten! Don't you know what day this is?"

"Thursday."

"What date?"

He looked at his calendar; and then his jaw dropped. Her birthday, and he had forgotten all about it! He jumped up, kissed her, and stormed back to the office where he had left his hat and coat. He rushed out and down to the chariot and went clattering off. He did not stop until he reached the shop of Bannister's fashionable jewellers. He was a rare visitor, but they knew him personally.

"Daniels," he began, a little out of breath, "this is my daughter Nancy's birthday. I want a trinket that'll make her forget everything—even the day she was born," he added, humorously.

"That falls in nicely," replied the jeweller. "We had something in the window the other day that attracted her."

"I see," said Maddox, preparing himself for the worst. "Pearls. Well, let me see it." So far as he was concerned, pills and pearls looked exactly alike. He would have to trust Daniels absolutely. "How much?" he asked, after a glance at the string.

"Twenty-five hundred."

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"Wrap it up—and charge it. A thousand December first and the balance January first.

"Six months, if you like. We folks make you wait often enough."

From her bedroom window Nancy saw her father's return; but she did not run down to greet him. She was wondering what would happen when Brand and Betty Mansfield saw each other across the table at dinner that evening.

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CHAPTER XVI

CATHEWE returned from New York that morning. He was not aware that a man, very much interested in his affairs, followed him out of the car and to the taxicab stand. He was quietly dressed, pleasant of countenance, with a humorous mouth and a pair of oddly humourless eyes. He sent a cold, level glance into the middle of Cathewe's back. At the taxicab stand he waited for his quarry to engage a vehicle and drive off; and then he selected a cab for himself and directed the chauffeur to proceed at once to Dunleigh Mansfield's on Polygon Hill. There will be no more of him. He comes into the story and goes out of it, comet-wise. But an astronomer will tell you that the aftermath of comets is devastation, annihilation, and obliteration. How many times, though, has this old top stood wincing for the blow, to escape by a hair—the hair of the comet's tail?

Cathewe had an appointment at the office. The appointee was not a willing one; he was bowing to force. When he arrived his air was nonchalant, except for the restless and continuous

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shifting of the strong cigar from one corner of his mouth to the other.

"Well, here I am," he said, impudently.

"Sit down, Shafer. Now, exactly why did you, a member of the city's detective force, enter my home like a burglar and break into my safe?"

"Because we had information that you might be some kind of a crook," was the ready answer.

"You lie, Shafer. You had no information. If I wanted to, I could nail your hide on my door for this. I want the truth."

"Say we wanted to know where you got that little four hundred thousand that always stays young. We don't like the smell of that money."

"That is, Mansfield doesn't."

"You got to guess again."

"Shafer, I'm going to give you a month to find a new job out of town."

"You don't say!"

"Oh, I shouldn't have sent for you if I hadn't something on you, as you would say."

"On me? Can the bluff," said the detective. "What have you got on me?"

"I'm going to let you wonder and worry about that. One month from to-day I'll lay the evidence on the chief's desk; and he won't dare back away from it, even if it does come from me. And, as

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the medium says out of the tea-cups, you'll go on a journey."

"Nothing doing."

"Mansfield will not be able to protect you."

"Mansfield? Where do you get the idea that I'm working for Mansfield?"

"One month. Shafer, the count I have against you I'll leave in the shadow; but there's another I can talk about. One of your jobs is that violent pro-Germans are kept moving; and there are a dozen nests of them in and about town."

"Now you're guessing."

"Do you think I'm a fool, Shafer? Do you believe I've run this newspaper for three years without digging into things myself? One month from to-day."

"I'll be here, Johnny on the spot, waiting to hear that evidence," replied the detective, truculently. The force which had brought him here was primarily that impelled by curiosity. He knew that Cathewe could proceed against him technically on the forced entrance to the Cathewe home; but he also knew that that could be quashed before it got to court. He got up.

"Good morning. Thirty days . . . or five years."

"What's that?"

"Five years. The evidence I have against

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you may be computed in so much prison time. Good morning."

The blood boiled up in the detective's face; but the cold blue eyes looking up into his made him reconsider the impulse to start something of a purely physical nature.

"All right. I'll be here at the end of the month."

"Your attitude is one of the evils I'm trying to eradicate, Shafer. You consider yourself immune so long as you labour under the ægis of Mansfield's power. I'm going to disabuse your mind in thirty days from now."

Cathewe swung his chair around to his desk and began to write. He did not look up until the door slammed. Then he leaned back, musing. But this musing was interrupted shortly by the bell of the telephone.

"Hello!" he called.

"This Mr. Cathewe?" came from the other end of the wire.

"How do you do, Nancy?"

"You told me to call you up this morning," said Nancy. "You are coming to my birthday dinner, Brand Cathewe?"

"I certainly am."

"What! you aren't going to argue and try to get out of it?"

"No."

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"In spite of the fact that Betty Mansfield will sit across from you?"

"In spite—no, because of that. I'm tired of hiding from her, Nancy. She's bound to know soon. I prefer to have the dénouement over with."

"After all, what does it matter?" A pause. "Brand, how came you to make those curious little periods in your manuscript?"

"Periods. Oh, I see. You mean the cross. That is a habit of newspaper writers. It is to indicate to the compositor that the sentence ends there."

"Ah! I was just curious. You write such a clear and beautiful hand that the little crosses vexed me. Now I understand. At seven, then, Mr. Cottar!"

The house telephone at the Maddox home was hidden conveniently under the stairs. Nancy hung up the receiver, but she remained in the little chair for some time, motionless, wide of eye but sightless. If she heard the door-bell ring it was only in a detached way. Nor did she observe the maid as she passed. It was only when she heard Betty's vibrant voice inquiring for her that she roused herself. How oddly heavy her body was!

As she quitted the recess under the stairs and walked smilingly and with outstretched hands

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toward Betty, she wanted to sit down again and laugh. Over what? Human inconsistencies; over habit, convention, to which the will is always more or less supine. The natural inclination was to run to her room, to free her breast of the stifling pressure. Instead, she took Betty in her arms, kissed her, and patted her shoulder, because that was the conventional thing to do. And she loved Betty. Nobody was to blame for the horrible ache in her heart. It was just there, that was all.

"Why, Betty, what's the matter?" she asked; for it came to her suddenly, as through a break in a fog, that Betty was not as joyous as usual.

Betty did not answer, but led Nancy into the drawing room with its freshly waxed floor for dancing that evening. She drew her friend down beside her on the lounge.

"I received a letter this morning," said Betty.

"A letter?"

"Don't you remember?"

"You mean a letter from that shadow man you told me about in Washington?"

"Yes. I . . . I had to sit down when I saw that envelope. My knees wouldn't hold me up."

"Was it postmarked New York?"

"Yes. It isn't fair. The whole thing hasn't been fair. I had never injured any one. I wasn't a flirt. The letter, Nancy, was good-bye."

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The blood thundered into Nancy's throat. She tried to speak but could not. Good-bye! He had bidden Betty good-bye! He had given her up! Hope, a hope of which she felt ashamed, tingled every nerve in her.

"I can't understand," went on Betty. "I am rich and he is poor. He says that always he will go on loving me. He asks me to forgive him if I have in any way been annoyed. Think of it! I can't go to him and say that money doesn't matter if . . . if he is the man I think him to be. I can't tell him that I haven't been annoyed. I can't tell him that I do or don't love him. Honestly, I don't know. Perhaps I've just created a man the like of which never existed, and I've fallen in love with that. It all hurts. It hasn't been fair. And now he says good-bye! You're the only friend I've got, Nancy, that I could come to. I haven't told Daddy. What is the use in telling him? I can't confront him with a shadow. All the detectives in the world could not trace the writer of these letters."

"You'll get over it, dear," said Nancy, hating herself. A word or two, and the riddle would be solved. Generous beyond ordinary, she stifled the impulse to take that page of manuscript from her bosom and spread it out for Betty to see. Once, indeed, her hand did steal up; but stonily

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she forced it down. What was the use in telling Betty? said Specious Argument. Wasn't there the width of the poles between Betty Mansfield and this shadow man? Hadn't he himself made it impossible?

And this was her birthday! To-night she would have to be gay with happiness; she would have to laugh and dance when her heart was breaking. She took Betty in her arms suddenly and fiercely and held her there. And in this position Maddox found them.

"Ha!" he boomed, brushing the snow from his beard and throwing his hat and coat on a chair. "Nancy, do you realize that you are twenty-four —a woman?"

"Am I?"

"Yes, ma'am."

"What is a woman?"

"It will be unethical as a physician. . . ."

"Father!"

"Well, a woman becomes a woman when she becomes curious rather than inquisitive."

"Did I used to be inquisitive?"

"Lord love you, you were the most persistent human interrogation point I ever met!"

He laughed, motioned the girls to make room for him, and plumped down between them with another of his "Has."

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"Father, what have you been up to?"

"Up to? What makes you think I've been up to something?"

"You always act like this when you've done something—foolish."

"Betty, do you ever talk to your father like that?"

"I'd be afraid to," admitted Betty.

"I'm afraid I've been too easy-going with this child. Nancy, exactly what is being foolish?"

"Doing something you ought not to. Out with it!" She caught hold of one of his ears.

"Well, I've ordered the awning. Happy thought, too, for it looks like a good snow-storm coming. And that means that I'm going to get stuck some night and have to walk home."

"What I want to know is, what have you been doing that's foolish?"

"Is love foolish?" he countered.

"You've been buying me a birthday gift!" She kissed him. "And you've gone away beyond your means."

"How do you know?"

"Because you're always giving things away: money, clothes, food. If mother and I did not watch you, the house wouldn't have any rugs or beds in it. You're the dearest, kindest man in the world! Now, what is it that I've got to take back to the jewellers?"

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"You won't take this back, Nancy. You couldn't. You're human. Shut your eyes, the both of you, and don't you open them until I say so."

Both girls covered their eyes with their palms. Miserable and unhappy, both of them, playing the comedy out because they loved the actor.

"Open!" he cried.

"Oh! Oh! Oh!" cried Nancy, as she saw the lovely string of pearls.

"Beautiful!" cried Betty.

Thought the father: "That'll take her mind off it for awhile, anyhow."

Thought Nancy: "He's right. I never could take them back. And I mustn't let him suspect."

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CHAPTER XVII

CUB reporters are a race apart. Say, for a year; then they become reporters, or they return to private life. They carry upon their beardless countenances an astute look—the keen gaze of Vidocq and the stern mouth of Holmes. In street-cars, in theatres, in restaurants, they "listen in" whenever they have the chance. You never can tell when a great piece of news is going to break. They should, however, be properly designated as butt-reporters. For they are continually the butts in the editorial rooms. Everybody takes a whack at them, experimentally. Sardonic practical jokes are played upon them. Their assignments are often wild-goose chases, merely to keep them busy and out of the office.

At home and abroad—everywhere except in the editorial rooms—he is a journalist. In France that word carries genuine dignity; here in America the regulars laugh at it. He becomes fascinating to the young girls. The power of the press! And when he takes them to the theatre on passes he inspires them with the same awe that the Matterhorn inspires in the Bedouin, happen the Bedouin

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got to Zermatt. Here is a great human mystery. The elation of getting somewhere on a pass has never responded to analysis except on the assumption that something for nothing is far more desirable than something for something.

Curious field of endeavour, the newspaper business. An editor may have to advertise for compositors, type-setters, or a printer's devil, but a mere flicker of the eyebrow will bring a thousand aspirants for one reportorial job. The rewards are nil. There isn't any future if you stick to the game. There is yet to be found a father who will, without protest, permit his son to become a newspaper man.

Why this legion eternally demanding admittance to a craft which never has and never will pay commensurately? It is the primordial instinct of the pioneer who finds himself without frontiers; it is the bane of the wandering foot; it is the hatred of routine. Take the war correspondent, the foreign correspondent, the star reporter; daily the desk is the same, but the task is new. Each day is not merely another day; it is a different day. What are mere wages set against three hundred and sixty-five new jobs? That is the lure; and certain souls will always respond to it.

The cub reporter on the Bannister *Morning Herald* was exactly like all cub reporters. He

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considered Cathewe the greatest man in the world, and the city-editor the worst. Cathewe knew a man when he saw one; the city-editor did not. His first assignment had been a joke. He had been sent out to one of the cemeteries to make note of any improvements; and he had returned with half a column describing the recent mausoleums. He was still mystified because the manuscript had not yet been typed. He was informed that it was being held against a dull day.

Another time—and this was recently—he had been sent up to interview Mansfield regarding the rumour that he was going to sell out to Schwab. He had succeeded in brushing by the solemn butler. Beyond, by the stairs, he had seen a beautiful young woman.

"I should like to see Mr. Mansfield. I am a reporter from the *Herald.*"

"Indeed!" The ravishing beauty had smiled. An old-timer, witnessing that smile, would have turned tail at once.

"He is in his study. Follow me. . . . Daddy, here is a reporter from the *Herald.*"

"Of all the damnable impudence!"

Before the cub could telegraph to his pedal extremities the way out, a hand fell upon his collar and he was Turkey-trotted out of the door and half way to the street.

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"Get anything?" the city-editor had inquired upon his cub's return.

"No. Mansfield kicked me out."

"Uh-huh."

The cub did not suspect the city-editor; but from then on he had it in for the Mansfields. Thus he becomes a kind of God in the car. Without the cub's rancour this tale might have had a different ending.

On the same morning that Cathewe arrived from New York, the cub got down before lunch and went into the file room. There are always at least two files in an editorial room: one to preserve intact and one for the convenience of reporters who sometimes have to cut out bits in order to preserve the continuity of follow-up stories.

The cub, using his penknife—for only editors use scissors—hacked out every editorial and news story he could find relating to Mansfield. When this task was completed he put them into a manila envelope, sealed and stamped it, and carried it over to the post-office, where he dropped it into the local mail-slot.

But the moment that envelope vanished from sight his rancour and satisfaction turned their obverse sides, as it were, and he suddenly saw himself contemptible. The girl wasn't to blame. The rumour might be true, that she was oblivious to certain phases of her father's character.

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He quitted the postoffice for the street, pushed up his collar, for it was beginning to snow, and walked half a block. There was no use arguing; he would have to get that letter back. He turned and trotted back to the postoffice, entering one of the rear doors. He was more or less familiar to the night shift; for frequently he was sent over to get the one o'clock night mail which carried the last of the country news stuff; and to save time the clerk would give it to him out of the mailbag. But he saw no familiar face this morning. Still, he hailed a clerk who approached the cage.

"My name is White, of the *Herald.* I want to get a letter I just dropped in the slot."

"Want to stamp it?"

"No; it's stamped. But I don't want it to go to the addressee. Changed my mind."

"Local?"

"Yes."

"Who's it addressed to?"

"Miss Mansfield."

The clerk moved off to consult some higher authority and finally returned with a negative shake of the head.

"Can't be done. It'll have to go through."

"But I've got to have it!"

"Well, there's only one way now. Telephone

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Miss Mansfield to return it unopened." The clerk went back to his pouches.

The cub saw that the case was hopeless. It was likely that he would give his name and address to Miss Mansfield! Cathewe would hear what he had done and fire him. Utterly miserable, he turned into a side-street and sought a favourite haunt of his—a buffet-saloon. He ordered a plate of hash and a cup of coffee and was striving to swallow without choking when his "listening in" faculties were aroused by a snatch of conversation in the next booth.

"To-night . . . guard at the south gate . . . more isolated."

He caught no complete sentence; only a word here and there. But he possessed the true instincts of the news-getter and was able to put two and two together. He got up, took his check, and walked by the next booth. He sent a quick, photographic glance into it, and moved on toward the cashier's desk. He paid the check and went out. Once in the street he made for the police-station as fast as his legs could carry him. He dashed into the day-captain's office. He made a bad beginning. He introduced himself and his paper.

"Huh! Well, whadda yuh want?"

"Overheard some Germans in Cahill's talking

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about blowing up something to-night. They're there yet. Can you give me a couple of men?"

"On your way! Everybody's seeing things."

"You refuse?"

"Clear out"—belligerently. "The *Herald* ain't too popular in here. Mog!"

"All right," shot back the cub, his voice unsteady. "But if anything does blow up, you'll get yours!"

There followed a scuffle of feet, but the cub was too agile for the paunchy police captain. He sensed, however, that this hasty departure had all the ear-marks of Mary Anderson's farewell to the public. He would never be a police reporter on the *Herald*, not while this régime was in power. Moreover, they'd have him on the carpet at the office for adding another brick to the hod of the regular man. On the other hand, if anything did happen—anything blew up—Cathewe would see to it that there would be a shake-up in the local police department that would get New York comment. Of course, he did not *hope* something would blow up.

He ran back to Cahill's, and the blood jumped into his throat when he observed that the men had not yet gone. Thrilled, he sat down and ordered another cup of coffee. He would trail these chaps; and trail them he did. North, east, south, and west, through this alley and that, toward the

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country, back to town, off for the railway yard and back to Cahill's. He was only eighteen. How was he to know that the men had set a trap for him and he had walked feverishly into it?

They kept him there at Cahill's until nine o'clock that night. Once they lost sight of him; but as he came out of the washroom, they sighed relievedly. As a matter of fact, though, he had slipped through the alley window and into the adjacent tailor-shop from where he had telephoned the office that he was trailing three German spies and wouldn't report for his assignment.

And what did they do in the *Herald* office? Laughed. Why not? It was only the cub, off on one of his wild-goose chases.

At nine the men departed, and the cub began his trailing again. This time there were no tortuous windings. The men headed directly toward the railway yard, and the cub decided that they were going to wreck the Mansfield steel mills.

There was a deal of freight movement. Nighttime there generally is. And there were many broken strings of empties to cut across. Once he regretted he hadn't asked for a partner in this enterprise.

Suddenly his men vanished. The boy fell into a dog-trot to the end of a string of empties. As he passed the last car, the sky fell out. When he

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came to his senses he was both gagged and bound. But he could see the cold, starry sky above him. It had stopped snowing earlier in the evening. He was at the bottom of a coal-car, which might be hauled to the main line at any moment. In that event, he would breakfast somewhere around Scranton.

He began to work at his wrists, remembering a performer at the vaudeville. By ceaseless straining and relaxing of the muscles the rope was destined to loosen ever so little; and ever so little is always a wedge.

It was midnight when he climbed the stairs to the editorial rooms. His face and hands were streaked with blood and coal-dust: he was a sartorial as well as a physical wreck. The thing that kept him on his feet was the knowledge that his hunch had been a good one. Instinctively, he staggered toward Cathewe's door—open as usual—because he knew that the chief would not laugh at him.

Groggy as he was, he saw that something was wrong with the chief. On such a night he ought to be at the desk in the composing room, with the night editor. The city room, which he had avoided, was noisy enough: the clicking of typewriters, the bawling of "Copy!" and the scurrying of feet, the coming and going of messenger boys. Yes, that

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room was normal. But what was the matter with the chief?—friend of his been killed? Dress-suit; daubs of printer's ink on the bosom of the shirt, the white tie awry, exposing the collar-button. But it wasn't these things; it was the peculiar attitude of the chief, who was dynamite on nights when a big piece of news "broke." Why was he sitting there like that, as if it were Sunday afternoon, when the whole town was in an uproar? Staring at the wall like that, his eyes wide and expressionless. . . . Had he lost somebody? The room suddenly began to roll.

"Chief!" began the boy, rocking on his heels. "They . . . got me! . . . I was a boob to try it a . . . alone! But I thought . . . If I reported here, you'd laugh or send . . . somebody else. Anyhow, I tried. . . ."

Cathewe turned his head, and sprang to his feet just in time to catch the boy as he pitched forward.

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CHAPTER XVIII

IT HAD been agreed between Betty and her father that, whenever she was to spend the evening out, she should first pass in review before him. So promptly at six-thirty she presented herself. Her gown was of turquoise taffeta, rather severe in its simplicity, but entrancing her style of beauty. She wore no jewellery of any kind, not even a ring. She swung on her toes in a kind of pirouette.

"Like me?"

"Betty, you're what the English call ripping!"

"I'm glad somebody thinks so."

"Somebody! No normal human eye could resist you. If I were a young man and you were someone else's daughter, I'd be after you morning, noon, and night. I'd turn over empires and all that, but I'd win you."

"Young men do not love like that any more, Daddy. They are timid. There are no more Lochinvars."

"Young woman, you say that as if you'd been trying some of them out." He advanced toward her with mock sternness and caught her by the el-

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bows. "You seem so different from the run of girls, that I've never contemplated your being in love with any one."

"I am not attractive, then—not worth a fight?"

He stared at her quizzically. "There's something out of kilter with that smile, Betty. What's happened?"

"Nothing." An all-embracing word, both truthful and equivocal. "The truth is, there is too much money. The poor young man is afraid of me; and the rich man is too old; and I shall be an old maid."

"That's nonsense! You are free, Honey, to marry when you love. I owe at least that much to you. I don't believe a fortune-hunter will ever trap you. You have the gift—I don't know where you got it—of seeing through people at a glance. Did you leave a sweetheart back there in France?" —gravely.

"Only such as school-girls dream of; nothing that was in flesh and blood. I'm glad you like the dress."

"I say, Betty, I almost forgot to tell you. I've got that fellow Cathewe at last, right in the hollow of my hand; and he is going to fade away from Bannister like those people in the movies. I've got him!"

"And so have I, Daddy."

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"What?" —nonplussed.

"Yes. I've got him, too, but he doesn't know it. And when the hour comes——" She extended a shapely hand, palm upward, which suddenly became rigid and contorted. Slowly the fingers closed. "Just like that."

"What the dickens have you been up to?" he demanded.

"I haven't the time now to discuss it; but to-morrow we'll exchange views on the subject. I'm in a hurry. I don't want to spoil Nancy's dinner by arriving like a petted prima donna—late. You dropped an idea one day, and I made use of it. That's all. You'll laugh when I tell you. By-by!"

"Wait a moment. I've got something for you to take to Nancy."

"But I'm taking her something."

"Well, you can take her this star-sapphire as my share. If the ring doesn't fit, she can have it reduced."

"Daddy, it's a beauty. But I forgot. The doctor brought her up a pearl necklace this morning. I don't like to ask questions, but is Doctor Maddox rich?"

"Good Lord, no! He makes about fifteen thousand a year and gives away half of that. I daresay his wife and Nancy have to watch him all the time. But I like that man. He's honesty in

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the superlative. A pearl necklace, eh? It will take him a year to pay for it. I say!"

"What?"

"Supposing you speak to him to-night and tell him I want to take over his charities, little and big, for a year?"

"Daddy, that is a beautiful thought; but I know the doctor. He might accept it, but only to double his efforts. Financially, he would be just as badly off. But I must be going!"

She kissed him and sped to the door, where she poised for a second. What a handsome man he was, this Daddy of hers! In after days she always thanked God for that glance: for she never saw her father's face like that again.

Mansfield selected a cigar—forgetting his own dinner was in the process of making—and blew a cloud above his head. Cathewe out of the way before Betty got a glimmer of the truth! A man by the name of Dunleigh Mansfield was in luck. But what the dickens had the child discovered concerning Cathewe, Cathewe the impeccable, at least here in Bannister? What had she discovered that the local police force could not? The hollow of her hand, she had said. She was her father's daughter.

Cathewe, the working man's friend! Cathewe, the protector of the poor! Cathewe, the stern

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and visionary Rienzi! March weather. He had come roaring into Bannister like a lion, and he would depart with the meekness of a shorn lamb. That dear, tender-hearted public! Having made a false God, the public would turn and rend it, shatter and scatter it. Cathewe, the son of Digby Hallowell!

That detective was clever. He had worked upon the simplest line imaginable: taken Cathewe's photograph and gone the rounds of the New York banks, and day before yesterday a teller and a cashier had recognized it. The son of Digby Hallowell!

When the butler came in to announce dinner, he received a shock. His employer, hitherto the most dignified man he had ever served, thwacked him on the shoulder in good fellowship, an act of condescension positively unknown in this house.

"And if that steak isn't done just right, I'll have your hide on the wall alongside Brandon Cathewe's!"

"It is done to a turn, sir."

"Let Sandy have the bone when I'm through with it. There's a celebration going on in these diggings to-night."

"Yes, sir. Might I suggest. . . ."

"A drop of that old Madeira? Very well, to-night."

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When the dinner came to the coffee and cigar, the butler withdrew, and Mansfield sloped comfortably in his chair.

There is magic in coffee and tobacco. The stimulant is negatived by the narcotic; the thinking machine moves smoothly. Berry and Weed: out of these two, great empires have had their initial impetus—empires of peoples, of moneys, of ideas. So there came into Mansfield's head a plan for the reconstruction of Bannister, through Betty. Whatever she wanted done was as good as accomplished. But he must work out these ends in his own way, subtly. One thing, of course, was utterly impossible, and that was directness. He would have to work out the plan by labyrinthian methods. Or there might be a local revolt. To give the girl a free hand, without creating a revolution. Somehow that appealed to his sporting blood. Cathewe out of the way, the spark in the powder-room would be extinguished.

But what did the child mean when she said she had the man in the hollow of her hand? Well, that puzzle would be explained away in the morning. She was her father's daughter. Under that grace of form, under that gentle tenderness and charity there was reinforcement of steel.

Cathewe.

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Mansfield quitted the dining room and sought his study again. He unlocked a drawer and pulled out many letters, letters from his henchmen. He tore them up and tossed them into the fire. There was always the possibility of dying, and he did not want Betty to know of certain shades even after his death. He tried to analyze this desire, but he came up against that same wall which confronted human thought since the day one. That he should want Betty to respect his memory!

Cathewe.

He walked over to a shelf and took down Gray's Elegy. . . .

> Can storied urn or animated bust
> Back to its mansion call the fleeting breath?
> Can Honour's voice provoke the silent dust,
> Or flattery soothe the dull cold ear of death?

What would it matter to Dunleigh Mansfield, once out of the coil, whether Betty respected his memory or not? Or was it that he did not want the reverse side of his life to spoil her faith, to disillusion her? There would be long years before her, and he was moving on toward the aisle of cypress. . . . "the dull cold ear of death!" A wish that she might be happy after he was gone. Was that it?

Cathewe. He found that he could not get away

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from that name. It sought him out like a search-light, persistently. The futility of self-lies! The boy was honest. He had played the game honestly. He had not attacked the legality of Dunleigh Mansfield's acts; he had criticised the patent immorality of them. Under his hand lay evidence which would ruin Cathewe and turn him forth as an outcast. An hour gone he would have used this evidence joyfully; now he doddered. Why? Because eventually Betty would find that out also: that Cathewe himself was an honourable man.

All at once Mansfield knew what he needed—the open. So he put on his cap and heavy coat and went out to the garage for the roadster. He would drive out to the munitions works and have a look at the pipe-line which was in progress and upon which men were even now toiling in night-shifts. Out there he would decide the fate of his enemy, this son of Digby Hallowell.

But fate itself had much in store for Dunleigh Mansfield this night.

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CHAPTER XIX

CATHEWE was anxious to have a little chat with Nancy before her guests began to arrive. He had telephoned her to this effect, and she had made the appointment at half after six. This meant, of course, a somewhat hurried toilet. But hollyhocks have a charm of their own, impervious to destruction. There was a little lock of hair over one ear. Nancy had not the time to tuck it in. There was, perhaps, a little more talc on one pretty shoulder than on the other. She was a trifle breathless, too, when she came into the library to greet him. Nancy dressed herself.

"George Cottar, what in the world have you to say to me that's more important than my new dress?"

"Nancy, you would look just as charming to me in a gingham apron, such as you wear when you rake the leaves. And if I were twenty . . ."

"Instead of . . . ?"

"Thirty-one, I'd be tempted to kiss your cheek."

"And what difference do eleven years make?" demanded Nancy, a bitter mischief pervading her.

"It is the age of compromise; so I will kiss your

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hand instead and wish you many happy birthdays."

Nancy gazed down upon his head as his lips lightly touched her hand. The look in her eyes, could he have seen it, would have made her father very unhappy. But in Nancy's blood was the leaven of Spartan courage. She did not release his hand, but led him over to the divan.

"Brand, do you realize that this is the first time I've ever seen you in the 'mournful paraphernalia of a gentleman in the evening?' That's one of your own lines."

"Do I look like a waiter, or what?"

"You look as if you had really been accustomed to wearing it." She laughed. "By the way, I want to thank you for those beautiful books. Now, what is it you wish to see me about?"

Her fingers began absently to stray across her hair. Deftly they trapped the wayward lock and tucked it in, found a loose hairpin and pressed it into place. A pat here and another there, then she dropped her hands to her lap. Into his head came the thought that a woman was never more attractive than when engaged in this artless pastime.

A confession by one who knows. The observing eye and trained ear of the novelist are stage properties of the novelist. In actual life they are

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quite as dense as any normal man's where a woman is concerned. Thus, Nancy's voice and expression conveyed nothing to Cathewe. She was Nancy, a good comrade, to whom he had come in trouble.

"Well?" she said.

"I come to you because you are my friend, Nancy. I have very few. I've rather avoided friendships because I knew that it was always possible to lose them."

"I am and always will be your friend, Brand."

There was a little stretch of silence. He bent toward his knees and picked out a pattern in the rug to study.

"You've been puzzled regarding my conduct in relation to Miss Mansfield. Haven't you?"

"In a sense. I can't help wondering what mattered it if she did know who you were."

"Did you ever enter a familiar room in the dark, to find all the furniture set in new places? Mentally, that is my condition. No matter which way I move, I bark my shins. I am figuratively worse off than if I were in a totally strange room. My caution would help me there. I came to Bannister upon a mad adventure. Romance! It is the strongest thing in me, and I have to fight it ceaselessly. An inheritance from my mother. She finds articulation in her music. I cannot find articulation in my work because I am ambitious

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to write human, not fairy, stories. So when the urge comes I plunge into the nearest maze, and bump and blunder through. I am in a maze now which apparently offers no exit. A series of ironies, some blunt, some sharp; that is life."

"Yes. Are you going to tell me that you came here because you'd fallen in love with Betty . . . somewhere else?"

He raised his head sharply. "Have I worn my heart on my sleeve?"

"Perhaps it was your effort to hide it."

"I didn't suspect you were so keen, Nancy. But you've hit upon the truth. Mansfield told me I might pay court to his daughter upon the condition that I come to Bannister and become a force. He made this condition in jest, but I accepted it in earnest. I do these mad things because one day I found myself in the valley of tragedy, and like a trapped animal I am always desperately trying to find some way out. And I found it here in Bannister, odd as that may sound. I shan't go into those details now; some future date, perhaps."

"Do you want me to help you?" She reached over and laid her hand on his. "As between two friends?"

"Nothing but magic or black art could help me, Nancy."

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"I'm not so sure," she replied, recalling that peculiar punctuation mark in his manuscript.

"It is not possible, Nancy. I came here because I loved her, at first sight, to find myself hoist 'twixt the devil and the deep blue sea. I had to fight her father; I had elected a certain way to go."

" 'Loved I not honour more,' " quoted Nancy, softly. "Or is it that you fear your fate too much?"

"You are making fun of me?"

"No, Brand. I am very sorry. I understand. A miracle must happen."

"And there ain't no sech animal. The power of Mansfield's will had lain upon this town until it was pretty bad in spots. So I undertook to hammer into the public mind just how baneful his influence was. I don't suppose he himself realized to what depth he had fallen. I didn't awaken him. He has given me thunder for thunder. But contact with the beautiful mind of his daughter softened him gradually; and your father tells me that now Mansfield loves his daughter. And she is redeeming him. A very unusual redemption it is. He can't go directly; it is no longer in the nature of the man to approach anything directly. He is like a man who closes his eyes after putting out the lamp—so he won't see the dark! On her side she believes him to be abused, maligned. To

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her I am a monger of lies, a political demagogue. No one dares tell her the truth; and I doubt if she has seen the *Herald* half a dozen times. I know positively that I have never been pointed out to her . . . as I shall be presently. I'm not going to hide any longer. So I have laid the dream away."

Nancy's heart gave a great bound. The buoyancy of hope! But she knew that there was a miracle close at hand. It rested upon her own lips. The one man, and she must give him to another! Her birthday party! And yet she knew that she would go serenely through it all because she loved them both. Upon her word rested the happiness of two people and the misery of a third. Why be silent and render all three miserable?

"A queer mess all around. And the odd part of it is, I don't want her to doubt her father. I don't want her to know any hurt. Every time I took issue with him, it hurt me. I'm basically a madman. I do the most infernally bizarre things. The impulse of the moment is invariably a plunge for me. Love isn't something you may direct. You cannot say you will love this or that person."

"No," said Nancy.

"The bolt is blind. Often we love where we don't want to love. And that is my misfortune.

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I wrote her letters, Nancy. I do know human nature. There is always something fascinating in the unknown. So I wrote her love-letters, unsigned, to keep myself in her thoughts until I fulfilled the conditions of the bargain. She may have torn them up; she may still have them. And now I shall never know. Nancy, Bannister is going to be my home. It is the way out I've been seeking. Already I love it. I shall build hospitals where the poor can go for nothing. I shall make playgrounds where the children can play on the grass. I shall tie a stout bandage around the eyes of justice. No one shall rob the poor any more and leave them without redress. Oh, I know. It sounds like a boy's dream. But I have the power, Nancy; tremendous power for good. An honest newspaper. . . ."

"And a noble heart! Do you believe in fairy stories, Brand? Father says he thinks you do."

"I believe in good fairies like you."

"Very well. I'm going to be one, Brand, for your sake. . . . There goes the bell!"

"If you don't mind," he said, "I'll run away into the greenhouse. I want to fend off the dénouement as long as possible. I don't care whom I go in to dinner with."

"Run along, Brushwood Boy!" replied Nancy, smiling.

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"I wonder what in the world I'd have done without you, Nancy."

"Nonsense! You're a nice boy, and any girl ought to be pleased to have you around. I'll send the man for you."

"I am not going in with. . . ." He hesitated.

"Mercy, no! Neither of you would ever forgive me."

The greenhouse had once been a long, rambling side porch. The roof and the south face were of glass; to the north was the house wall. There were no orchids or potted orange-trees: pansies and garden-pinks and geraniums and a few roses. This was the doctor's playground. He liked to bury his fingers in the smelly earth; and because he knew it was not a conservatory, he called it a greenhouse.

Cathewe sat down in a camp chair and studied the stars. . . . Perhaps in a little while she would go away again. Love was not immortal, not the love of a man for a maid. He would never forget, but the day was bound to come when he could look upon her without any petty disturbance of collective thought. He would throw all his energies into his work, his books, and his newspaper, and lead his followers into a promised land. A powerful newspaper and three millions

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in money! Hospitals and homes and playgrounds; a law firm to handle the business of the poor, to advise and protect them; a free dispensary. And the thousand and one things he could and would do for these people who had so recently defended him. The way out, and he had found it here in Bannister!

There was an incandescent lamp at each end of the greenhouse; but where he sat there was only the dim light of the winter stars.

He heard a door close, then a light scurry of feet on the cement floor. An intrusion. He stood up. A woman was approaching the spot where he stood. No doubt she believed herself alone. She paused suddenly to inhale the perfume of the pinks. When she raised her head, he saw who it was.

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CHAPTER XX

ALL day Betty had been in an unusual state of mind. Emotionally, she had been knocked about grievously. Wrath, indignation, pain, bewilderment, wonder, pride, chagrin: blind shuttles that wove a kind of nightmare for her. She had been hurt, unfairly; and she was powerless to strike back because one cannot strike a phantom. Had she been reared in America, she knew she would never have opened the second and succeeding letters. Not because of any particular sense of impropriety; rather it was the point of view; and her point of view was essentially French. Nancy's point of view was that of the run of sensible, well-bred American girls. No matter how beautifully written, the anonymous letter had but one abiding place—the waste-basket. She recalled that her American instinct had at first led her to the fire.

The French girl, eternally hedged in, was always immediately susceptible to an intrigue of this order; and fourteen years of association and training had instilled into Betty's blood that romantic ardour which makes the French woman supremely

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attractive. A French woman, having received that final letter, would have shrugged and looked about for a new adventure. The affair would have slipped from her mind with the ease of a cloak from her shoulders. Betty, French by adoption and American by birth, could accept the intrigue but could not shake it loose.

There finally opened up in her a vein of unsuspected recklessness. She determined no longer to hold herself aloof. She would make herself attractive to men, and without mercy make them all pay for the hurt she had received at the hands of one. She never suspected that her cold rage was but an expression of the Mansfield blood.

A little while previous to the making of her toilet for Nancy's birthday party, she had gone resolutely to that Florentine box, taken out the letters and ripped one of them across the middle, savagely . . . and burst into tears after she had done so.

When the limousine drew up to the curb before the Maddox place, she did not alight at once. She stared through the window at the little house across the way. She wondered if, with a mother like that, she would have been the victim of her present unhappiness. She did not want laughter, jests, dancing; she wanted to sit beside that beauti-

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ful and remarkable woman while she played. If it had been anybody's party but Nancy's!

What was it his mother had called him? Sonny?

"In a moment," she said to the chauffeur who had opened the door.

The disciple of Fabre. A grave, handsome young man, with a whimsical eye; now that she thought of it, a mystery. She had never met him anywhere socially. He did not belong to the country club; she never saw him in the fashionable restaurant after the theatre. Ants. Ants and butterflies did not flock together, certainly . . . why not? whispered the Mother Eve. And instantly a plan of campaign formed in her mind. She would put the first phase of it into action on the morrow. It offered attractions; and when she stepped from the car, she was conscious of a lightness of spirit.

She threw her arms around Nancy and kissed her; and Nancy complimented her gaily upon the beauty of her gown. And both of them were passing through that singular phase of life which crystallizes the outlook and makes for misanthropy or tender philosophy.

"And she believes I am happy!" thought Betty.

"What shall I do?" thought Nancy. "How shall I act? To tell her that Brand wrote those letters would only add to the confusion, since

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he has built a Chinese wall between them. Am I fool enough to hope? Would I not despise him if he spoke of love to me? Nancy Maddox, spinster . . . because she will never love anybody else!"

Betty at once became encircled. Fresh and pleasant faces these young men had; but not one of them attracted her. She could not have embarked upon the mildest sort of flirtation with any of them; no more than she could have struck her dog when he hadn't done anything wrong. Laughter began to bubble up in her. She wanted to be alone. It was so funny! She had set forth to wreak vengeance upon mankind for her hurt, and she could not begin even on these!

Among other things, she had been taught how to leave admirers without offending them. A smile, a little nod, and the act was consummated. She could not remember how she reached it, but reach it she did—the door to the greenhouse. She must laugh; and if Nancy's friends heard her burst into laughter, illogically, they would credit her with madness or insolence. However, the craving proved to be only a touch of hysteria; and once the door was shut behind her, the tension vanished. The scent of the flowers and the moist earth helped to steady her, too. Still, she felt a trifle weak and would have liked to sit down.

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She remembered there were camp-chairs somewhere; and she walked down the little alley between the boxes and tubs, peering right and left. When she came to the box of pinks, she stopped to inhale the spicy perfume. Raising her head, she saw the white expanse of a dress-shirt, quite close.

"I thought I was alone," she said.

"You say that with a shade of resentment. I was here first."

"Goodness!—the ant-man! What kind of bugs wander about at night in greenhouses?" Just what she needed: a clever, wordly man with whom to exchange banter and chaff for a few minutes. A thought struck her in a kind of ricochet. She couldn't wreak vengeance upon this man, either, because once he had been kind to Sandy the Airedale. She laughed. There was no note of hysteria in the laughter. "Please find me a chair."

He found one under a box, and opened it. "You take mine. It will be cleaner and drier. The bugs that wander in the night? Well, there are dream-bugs, and memory-bugs, and conscience-bugs; they are as populous as Jason's dragon-teeth. But they vanish in company."

"That rather leaves me 'twixt wind and water, as sailors say."

"Meaning?"

"I don't know whether I am welcome or not."

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"As welcome as light coming into the dark. I like to watch the stars. There's a wonder about them that all the astronomers, ancient and modern, cannot dissipate, because human beings are fundamentally superstitious."

She did not deem it necessary to reply; and for a little while they stared at the stars . . . . without seeing them.

Here, beside him, like this! And now he never could tell her; she would never know. Had she read those letters? Had they touched her, made an impression on her mind? Did she comprehend that it was real love? It was human to want to know desperately; and there was no human way through this wall which an ideal had thrust between them. What a madman he was! She on Polygon Hill and he in this little backwater street: separate destinies. In an hour or so she would learn the truth; and by her faith in her father she must hate and despise Brandon Cathewe.

Pits; no matter which way he turned he dug them. He became aware of a new twist in the many-faced irony of this adventure. He had risen to power in Bannister by the leverage of her father's misdeeds. Without this capital, the *Herald* would never have been roused from its moribund state. His own personality would have been negligible. Mansfield had, impelled by a

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sardonic mood, directed him to Bannister; and he had become Mansfield's Frankenstein, which, rending the creator, would at the same time rend itself. There did not exist more perfect mockery.

Here, her shoulder almost touching his—the woman he loved! And the God of irony had whisked her as far away actually as if she had been transplanted upon Jupiter.

"Jupiter!" he said aloud, unthinkingly.

"And what about Jupiter?"

"Jupiter?"

"You spoke aloud."

"Oh, I was thinking of something up there that I want."

"Well! I have heard of persons wishing for the moon; but Jupiter!"

"In wishing for things we cannot have, what's the harm in wishing big! Why wish for the moon when Jupiter is thirteen hundred times larger than the earth?"

"What an erudite person you are! And what would you do with Jupiter if you had it?"

"Oh, I only want to go there and come back."

"With what?"

"A dream that has, I suspect, flown that far away."

"We do waste a good deal of time . . . wishing for things we cannot have."

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"Do you?"

"I have, naturally, being human like everybody else. What kind of a dream?"

"The most beautiful of all dreams."

"I might interpret that, if I knew you better. Am I ever going to know you better?"

It required quick thought on his part to find an evasion. "You will be in Bannister this winter?"

"This is my home."

"Then it is quite likely."

Silence.

Still that baffling reserve, she thought. But this time he should not escape. Before they left the greenhouse she intended to ask him point-blank what his name was. A mystery here was utter nonsense. He was Nancy's friend; and there was no logical reason why he should not be Betty Mansfield's.

We all have a habit of conjuring up pictures of persons we hear about but do not see. We stubbornly cling to these rude conceptions and are nonplussed when confronted by the reality. So it was with Betty. Indelibly registered in her mind as Brandon Cathewe was a picture of a wild-eyed, dark-haired anarchist, not very clean, and thoroughly dishonest.

As the silence grew there burst upon her the sudden acknowledgment that she liked this un-

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known. Nebulously he had been in her thoughts frequently of late; now, in this moment, he emerged into the clear. He was so different from all the other men she had met. The first man who had not, in some fashion or other, subtly flattered her. His propinquity gave her a sense of freedom, even though this was only the third meeting. With all other men she was instinctively on guard, at least verbally. With this one she felt that she could let down the bars to any mental fancy and be perfectly understood. Why? Was it because, just behind him, stood the vision of that wonderful woman who was his mother?

"Your mother has fascinated me."

"I am quite sure the fascination is mutual. She has done for you what she never does for strangers. You see, I am more or less familiar with her moods. She often plays for Miss Maddox and her father—placidly. Somehow you touched the flame and passion in her. She sensed the musician in you. You sing."

"You were there?"

"Yes—in the study. I apologize for not making my presence known. But I wanted to hear more of your singing, and was afraid you'd stop if I appeared."

"I shouldn't have minded . . . after the first song."

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The door opened, and Bannister's itinerant butler—the caterer's man—announced that dinner was served. As they reached the door, Betty turned upon Cathewe swiftly.

"I am Miss Mansfield, as you know. And you are . . . ?"

"The King of Mount Sipylus."

"You are in the encyclopedia?"

"By the name of Tantalus?"

The light was in his face now, and she observed that he had the air of one very tired.

Nancy herself rescued the situation. She evidently recognized that some crisis was in the making. She caught Betty by the arm and drew her aside. She turned to Cathewe.

"Miss Stoddard is waiting for you."

He nodded and hurried off.

"Nancy . . ." began Betty, a fiery note in her tones.

"Betty, here is something I want you to read." Nancy put into Betty's hand a sealed envelope. "Under no circumstance open it until you are home. After you read it, telephone me what you think of it."

"Something I must not read here?" asked Betty, eying the envelope doubtfully, perhaps impatiently.

"You would prefer to read it in seclusion.

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Here comes your table partner. It is only a bit of manuscript. I want it returned."

Betty folded the envelope and hid it in the bosom of her gown. She went into the dining room, angry and confused. Tantalus! What did he mean? And why had Nancy intervened like that? Once seated, she saw that her unknown cavalier was directly opposite. He consistently refused to meet her eye, however. But for all that, no move of hers escaped him.

"Mr. Morrison, who is the gentleman opposite?"

"You don't know him?"

"I have met him rather unconventionally, but there has been no introduction."

"Perhaps you will not want one. He is Brandon Cathewe, the editor of the *Herald*."

For a moment the candlelight grew dim and the shadowy wall rocked.

"I had pictured him quite a different sort," she said, evenly. "Will you present him before we leave the room?"

"If you wish it"—distressed. The young man wondered what had possessed Nancy to bring these two together under one roof.

"I wish it."

He glanced covertly at the beautiful profile, now without colour. From the odd emphasis of that crisp sentence, he gathered that, having the

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name of Morrison instead of Cathewe, he stood in great luck.

The dinner progressed smoothly to its end. There was laughter and light banter and amusing gossip; and underneath a current of uneasiness. For all of them understood that here was food for days of speculation. Brandon Cathewe on one side of the table and Betty Mansfield on the other! A bit of drama which all were able to grasp properly. But Nancy's reason for staging this drama was as legible as Urdu to a Chinaman.

Their sympathies, too, were equally divided. Betty was popular. Her beauty and wealth created no envy. No one ever envies the beautiful princess except in fairy stories. Her sensible charities and generosity, her charm of manner, won them all unconditionally. At first they had felt sorry for her; now this sorrow was overlaid by admiration. They saw, what she did not suspect in the least, that she was making over her father, humanizing him.

And none could now doubt the honesty of the aloof young man across the table, this semi-hermit who wanted nothing for himself and all good things for Bannister.

The introduction took place after the other guests had left the dining room. Immediately the embarrassed master of ceremonies took to

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his heels. Betty and Cathewe stood alone, facing each other.

"Suppose we return to the greenhouse?" she suggested.

He led the way, closing the door gently. "I have tried to avoid this moment, but it was inevitable."

"Why do you hate my father?"

"I do not hate him. We have different ideals."

"I was just beginning to like you!"

"And now?"

"Oh, I don't know! Something dreadful seems to have happened to me. Has my father ever wronged you or yours?"

"No."

"Then why do you attack him?"

He was silent. All this was totally unexpected, out of his reckoning. He had come prepared against a cold insolence which would speak only with the eye, and pass on, forever. But to confront him like this with questions, and with a courage which he was inclined to believe was perilously close to tears! He could not defend himself because he loved her. He could not dispel any portrait she had drawn of him; and the knowledge filled him with savage irony. He had deliberately set his neck in this springe.

"I love my father, and he loves me; we are twain

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as one. He will not stoop to defend himself from calumny. Different ideals! My father has made this city prosperous. What have you, an outsider, done?"

"Not an outsider, just an outcast!"—in the full tide of bitterness. "I am cursed with envy. What another man has, I want. If I can rob a man legally, I do it. Why should I care where my money comes from, so long as it comes? I have only one God—self. I am one of those madmen whom society permits to roam at large because society doesn't know what to do with them. And we don't know what to do with ourselves!"

The abysmal misery in the inflections went over her head. "That is not defence for slander."

"But I am not defending myself. I am stating a condition of the mind."

"And the future?"

"Whenever our ideals clash, it is inescapable that I shall attack your father."

"Then I will defend him. After January first you will no longer direct the policies of your despicable newspaper."

"And what miracle will happen to prevent me?"

"It has already happened. At this moment I control the majority of the stock." The level quality of her tones was Mansfieldian—cold and implacable.

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The normal outcome of such a revelation—the shattering of his wonderful dreams, his future, the invitation of Ishmael once more to take to the road—should have been the crystallization of despair. He sensed nothing beyond the fact that this was the end of the last chapter and the impulse to crush her in his arms, kiss her, and rush away.

Perhaps he would have let this impulse have its way had not a chemical phenomenon intervened. There came a series of rumbles like thunder in the distance. The greenhouse trembled, and there was the crisp tinkle of falling glass. Instinctively both of them wheeled and stared through the glass at the sky in the east. They saw it grow lurid then sharply ruddy.

"The munitions," he gasped. And ran toward the door.

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CHAPTER XXI

WHEN the cub reporter fell in a faint on the paper-littered floor of Cathewe's office, Cathewe became affected by a strange tightness in his throat. This callow boy, bruised and bloody but undaunted, getting back to the office the Lord only knew how, but getting back because the office might need such information as he had acquired!

As he pillowed the lad's head upon an overcoat and washed the blood and grime from his face, Cathewe fell to musing upon the elusive human attribute called loyalty. Reporters and soldiers, there was only one difference—uniform. Always obeying without question, always ill-paid; but the soldier had one spectacular advantage. A bit of valour, and his general decorated him and the public lionized him; whereas the deeds of the reporter were shelved unsung. The same quality of courage which carried a staff runner through a barrage of high explosives had carried this cub back to the office with his information and description of the men who had succeeded in blowing up a section of Bannister. And to-morrow he

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would be going the dull round of routine, registering real-estate deals and the local market reports!

Loyalty directly to the *Herald* and indirectly to the man who controlled it. He had, then, the gift to draw and hold the fealty of men, of inspiring them with enthusiasm, with courage. Until this hour he had never given the phase a single thought.

The boy opened his eyes.

"Can you talk? Are you up to telling what happened?" asked Cathewe.

"Yes, sir. I'm all right now. A little groggy, but nothing to speak of."

"Take his story, Sanderson."

"Say, chief," whispered the boy, when the reporter went back to the city room, "there's something else I've got to tell you. I did something rotten this morning. It's been bothering me all day. I was a skunk."

"Well, what have you done?"

"The other day they sent me up to interview Mansfield. His daughter led me into his study, knowing what would happen. The old pirate grabbed me by the collar and ran me past the butler half way to the street. That made me sore. So this morning I cut out all the news stories and editorials concerning him and mailed them to Miss Mansfield, with an unsigned note that everything was true. Well, the moment I

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dropped the stuff in the postoffice, I got cold feet. I tried to get it back, but there was nothing doing because I'd stamped it. It wasn't . . . well, it wasn't what you'd call sportsmanlike. I'm horribly sorry."

"So am I," said Cathewe, gravely. "I ought to twist your neck."

"All right, I'm fired."

"No. What you did to-night squares that. You're going on the payroll at twenty a week, as long as I have anything to say. The fault is Chadwick's. He had no business to send you up there. But I'm glad you told me. There's a taxi for you below. Can you make it alone, or shall I call one of the boys?"

"I'm all right." The boy got up, swayed, and gasped sharply: "Gee! they sure beat me up."

Cathewe called to the city room for someone to help the boy to the cab; and as soon as this was done, the harried editor fell to pacing.

January first. It would not have hit him so hard but for that super-woman, his mother. To force her to assume again the rôle of Hagar to his Ishmael, when she had finally accepted Bannister as the "haven under the hill!" To lose all this, to see his dreams crumble, because he had hesitated over what might be called a moral technicality! Hadn't he dipped into that money

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to carry along the payroll? What was thirty or forty thousand, which in time he could have paid back of a certainty, against the possibility of this catastrophe? They would have sold out to him eagerly enough; and he had doddered. All because they had agreed on honour never to sell out to Mansfield. They admitted selling to a young attorney who was in no wise affiliated with the Mansfield interests; but they had been totally unaware of the fact that Miss Mansfield had been standing in the background. Nevertheless, they had betrayed him. They had not warned him of the offer, which signified that they had been offered two or three times the par value.

Again the word loyalty. She did not want the *Herald*. What became of it after its present editor was gone would be immaterial to her. She had bought the *Herald* simply to strangle the only potent enemy her father had. Loyalty. No suspicion, then, had entered her head that where there was smoke there was fire. And how would that envelope full of clippings affect this loyalty?

The old man of the sea was still on the shoulders of Digby Hallowell's son. He would have to start all over again, somewhere, somehow. He would sell the little home and turn back the proceeds to his mother. And what would she do—return

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to Florence or follow his new fortune? After all, there was no doubt in his mind. From now on until the end of time—together.

But where had the girl found those fifty missing shares? No matter. She had found them. A shadow in the doorway distracted his musings.

"Ah, Matthews!" he cried, as a man about his own age came in. The newcomer's face was begrimed with smoke and his overcoat was flaked with ashes. "Give me the gist of it. I've been holding up the editorial page for two hours."

The star reporter dropped into the chair beside his chief's desk.

"Five dead and forty-seven injured. The biggest story that ever struck this town, Mr. Cathewe, and there is a phase to it I just don't know how to handle. I want your point of view first. Great! There'll be a revolution in thought in this burg to-morrow if you will let me swing the yarn in my own way."

"That's always understood here, Matthews. There's no wall around the truth in this office. What's the big thing?"

"Bannister has got two great citizens that we didn't suspect. The bravest of the brave, and all that. When I hit the trail out there, the main thing in my head was this: in working a day and night shift at top speed on his water-line, the

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Federal authorities will not meddle. He had originally followed the architectural plans; and on paper the elevated tubs seemed to be plenty. The thing that saves him, though, is his tackling the pipe-line on his own initiative."

"I understand. How about the hospital?"

"Wiped out. But it happened to be empty."

"And the two great citizens?"

"Mansfield and that stunning girl of his. That girl goes sailing out there in her dinner gown and turns her big limousine into an ambulance, and makes twelve trips to the hospitals. I stood beside her once and brushed the sparks off her sable coat, which to-morrow won't be worth thirty cents. Lord, but she was a picture! When she turned up for the eighth trip, the crowd cheered her. I joined that cheer. I'm a hard-boiled egg, for a fact, but the smoke didn't cause all the tears in my eyes."

"Go on, man, go on!" Cathewe shut the door to the humming city room.

"The place was totally wrecked. All the water in the world could not have saved it. They must have got through via the railroad. The two National Guard boys on duty there are in the hospital with banged-up heads. Four tanks of T.N.T.—you know he had four separate fields of them, so that if an accident happened to one

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field, the others would be immune—in the four fields exploded simultaneously. Which gave rise to the supposition that time-bombs had been placed under each tank. Anyhow, the fire started at four points of the compass. A loss of about a million, all Mansfield's; for that was an individual enterprise."

"And if only someone had listened to the cub, we might have prevented it. The police chased him into the street, and here in the office we laughed. We thought it was one of his spy-mad stunts. Well, go on."

"Well, the girl is in the city hospital——"

"Hurt?"

The strained note caught the reporter's ear, and he looked puzzled. "No. Just watching at the side of her father's cot. And here's the brilliant part of the story. Seems Mansfield was out there inspecting the work on the pipe-line when the place blew up. He wasn't touched, but he hung around, giving orders. And he was a mighty cool hand, too, they tell me."

"But the hospital!"

"I'm coming to that. What he did was as brave a thing as might happen over there in France. One side of his face will be badly scarred and his left hand crippled. Dashed into a blazing shack for three Slav kiddies that had been deserted by

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their terror-stricken father. Coming out the door frame fell upon him. But he staggered through, into the safety zone. He was badly burned, but the kiddies escaped with nothing more serious than singed hair."

"And then?"

"Not a sound from that crowd! First-off, that struck me as rather hard and cruel. But I got the rights of it shortly. Stunned. That the man who had used them like sheep should risk his life for three kiddies who weren't anything to him had stunned them. When they awoke, he was on his way to the city hospital. Looks to me, chief, as if our capital has suddenly been wiped out. We can't jump on the old freebooter hereafter."

"Thank God for that!" said Cathewe. "I'd like nothing better than to go up there and shake his good hand."

"Then the lid is off?"

"Squeeze all you can out of the story. Let the town realize that Dunleigh Mansfield has come home. For that's what has happened."

"Here's the real climax. The girl carried eleven men to the Good Shepherd. When she got there with the twelfth, there wasn't room. So she had to take the man to the city hospital. She saw to it that the man was given the best aid obtain-

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able. When they had got him all swathed up in cotton, she chanced to turn toward the next cot —and there lay her father!"

Cathewe caught his star man by the shoulders and pushed him from the room. He himself had work to do. He sat down and wrote the editorial which was talked about long after the fire was forgotten. This editorial was headed: "Mansfield Comes Home."

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CHAPTER XXII

BETTY, her beautiful sable coat covered with scorched spots and her dinner gown soiled and disordered—for she had worked along with the hospital nurses—Betty, who had slept in the chair beside her father's cot, spread out the *Times* and with heavy eyes scanned the black headlines. After one glance her weariness dropped from her.

"Daddy!" she cried, exultantly.

Mansfield's eyes, the tip of his nose, and one side of his mouth were visible; the rest of his face was hidden under blocks of absorbent cotton. He could only whisper because one side of his mouth was taut with blisters.

"You're a hero! The whole town is talking about your deed. Listen." She began reading the account.

When she made the first pause, he signified that he wanted to speak. She leaned down. "What paper is that?" he asked.

"The *Times*."

A newspaper he owned, body and soul. "Get a *Herald* and see what that paper has to say."

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"A *Herald?*"—with an expression of such distaste that it was communicated to her hands which convulsively crumpled the newspaper in her lap. "A *Herald?*"

"Yes."

There was something in his eyes that puzzled her. It had the appearance of a twinkle of humour, but she knew that that could not be. She called to one of the nurses, made her request, and waited with her father's uninjured hand between hers. The nurse reappeared shortly; and Betty accepted the *Herald* with an air as of picking up, with tongs, something offensive. She flung it open, rather noisily and wholly resentfully . . . and became statuesque. Mansfield watched her, his glance alert. He saw the resentment fade, to be replaced by an expression of stupefaction; he saw a dozen emotions pass over her face—sunshine and cloud-shadows. He touched her knee.

"Never mind the first page. See if there is an editorial."

She opened the newspaper to page four. "There is."

"Read it to me."

When she had done—with a voice that had been strong at the beginning but which presently lost its resonance and broke frequently toward the

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end—the paper slipped from her hands to the floor and she stared across the row of cots.

"I don't understand," she said, addressing nobody in particular. "Daddy, I bought the controlling interest in the *Herald* yesterday morning. And last night at Nancy's I told Mr. Cathewe that his successor would be appointed in January."

"You—what?" barked Mansfield, the left side of his face stabbing him with pain.

"Bought it to stop its lies. But I don't understand. *That* was beautiful."

The light in Mansfield's eyes broke into many little points, and the lids worked rapidly. "Betty, you have met him?"

"Twice, accidentally. He remained unknown until last night. He . . . he rather interested me, he was so unusual."

"He made no attempt to meet you?"

"That is the strange part of it. He always tried to avoid me. He said he warred against you because your ideals were different."

"He gave me an ideal?"

"Yes."

"That . . . was sportsmanlike. What do you purpose to do with the paper?" This wonder-child of his, secretly buying up the *Herald* stock; his enemy her enemy!

"I don't know now. I don't suppose I had any

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plans mapped out for the future. I just wanted the attacks against you stopped. He says you have come home. What does he mean by that?"

"I'll mull it over and tell you what I think of it this afternoon. You run along home, take a tubbing, and climb into bed. You're about done, Honey. And I'll be rested, too, when you get back."

"I *am* tired. But there is something I want to tell you—must tell you—before I leave. I've been hiding something from you, Daddy. In France it would be called an affair. And yet, I don't know. You can't have an affair with a man you have never seen, whose name you do not know. For more than three years I have been receiving letters. Love-letters, Daddy. If mother had been alive, I'd have gone to her with them. Somehow I could not come to you. I was afraid you would not understand. I'm going to be honest. They intrigued me deeply. I began to search faces, listen when young men spoke. They were beautiful letters. Any woman might be proud to be written to as I was. After a long silence, the last letter came yesterday. It was good-bye. I am still dizzy wondering why he bothered me at all. They followed me all over Europe. I often felt ashamed, but more often thrilled and exalted. I am not philosophical, Daddy; I am young; and until that morning you

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told me you loved me, I was lonely. I can speak now because the affair has come to an end. When I go up to the house, I shall destroy those letters."

"A writer—with a little money," whispered Mansfield, his gaze directed toward the ceiling.

"What did you say?"

"Nothing important. But I would not destroy those letters. Some day you will be happily married, and you and your husband will laugh over those effusions. I'm going to ask you a question. If this phantom materialized, would you find yourself in love with him?"

"I could tell better after he materialized. What would you advise me to do with the *Herald?*"

"I'll mull that question over, too. Better run along now."

She kissed the tip of his nose. Mansfield, stirred by a tumult of emotions, followed her with his gaze until she passed out of the ward. He wanted to smile—the old ironic twist of the lips. Youth will be served. Letters, to trap and hold the romantic side of her until he had made good! A dreamer and a fighter. His own edifice—the grim fortress of Self—lay in ruins about him. But he could see distances now; his vision was no longer obscured. Had he come home? He wondered. The son of Digby Hallowell; and by a turn of the hand to ruin him absolutely, so far

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as his usefulness in Bannister was concerned. Magnanimity. That editorial breathed of it. What to do with a man who told the world that his enemy was a hero? Dunleigh Mansfield closed his eyes and for a long time lay very still.

When Betty arrived home, she picked out her personal mail from the stack on the hall bench, and went to her room. She glanced over the letters casually and decided not to read them until after she had been refreshed with sleep. As the maid was helping her to undress, a crumpled envelope fluttered to the floor. Betty suddenly recollected that it was the letter Nancy had given her. She started to rip open an end, but desisted. Just now she did not want to be bothered by anything or anybody. The turmoil and horror of the past night had sapped her vitality. Both her body and her mind seemed drugged.

"Call me at one promptly," she said, as her head touched the pillow.

"What shall I bring you for lunch?" asked the maid.

Betty did not answer. She was already asleep. For four straight hours her pillow was oblivion; and when she awoke she had to think strongly to convince herself that what she had gone through was not a nightmare. She ate her lunch sitting up in bed. She saw that outside the day was

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glorious. When the maid carried off the tray, Betty clasped her knees and mused. The shock of that moment, when she turned to find her father on the adjacent cot! Magnificent! Even his enemy had admitted it. Mansfield Comes Home. It was odd how that phrase clung. The real significance escaped her. It was a caption. The line was not repeated in the body of the editorial.

She saw the mail on the bed stand and reached for it. Fate decided that she should open the large envelope first. Newspaper clippings. She spread them apart, fan-wise. She caught a single line in the top clipping—"The Lord of Polygon Hill is always safely within the law." She made as though to fling from her the offending things; but presently they took upon themselves the sinister fascination of the door to Bluebeard's chamber. One by one she read them. Some of them mentioned her father directly; some of them spoke of him as the Lord of Polygon Hill.

Throttler of efficiency in the fire and police departments.

Railway franchises, non-taxable, thereby adding to the burdens of the poor.

Twenty gin-mills owned by proxy.

Apartment houses in the district of ill-repute. Owned under other names.

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Seven thousand employees who were forced to vote as Mansfield willed or lose their jobs, despite the secret ballot.

Money-mad. Millions and wants more.

The war means only so much more profit.

Opposed the employers' liability act.

Fought direct primaries.

Holds aloof on the child-labour problem.

Fought the income tax.

One by one Betty read them, now burning with fury, now cold with implacable hate. She came to the last clipping. It was the story of an inventor whom her father had betrayed and permitted to die a pauper; a terrible narrative of the ruthlessness of business, of the callosity of self-interest; written by someone who knew the exact meaning of words, who was master of clarity, who knew when and how to strike emotionalism (Cathewe himself had written this article). The girl realized at once that this was not political. There was a clarion ring of truth here that was inescapable. And yet she knew it could not be true. Her father, who had risked his life last night to save three little children; her brave father, whose hand would henceforth be crippled and whose face would be terribly scarred! It could not be.

A picture crept into her mind, insidiously, though she fought it: a bleak, cold room with

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broken walls and bare floor and windows stuffed with paper, and the quiet, broken thing on the bed. Joined to this picture, her father on his cot; side by side with this sinister indictment, the unstinted praise—"Mansfield Comes Home."

The truth! For her honest mind could no longer dismiss these facts as the venom of a political antagonist. The truth! To whom might she go? Not to her father in his present critical condition . . . Maddox! The doctor would not lie to his God-child; he would translate this mystery. She flung herself out of bed and ran to the extension telephone. She caught the doctor just as he was starting out for the hospitals, for all the doctors in town were in demand this day. Yes; he could give her a few minutes, but he was hard pressed.

She was standing by one of the living-room windows when the old chariot careened up the drive. She ran to the door herself, caught him by the sleeve, and hurried him into the living room.

"How's Dunleigh?" he gasped. What was the matter with the child? This was not the pallor of weariness. "You ought to be in bed," he added.

She pushed him into a chair and laid the clippings on his knee. "Read them," she said.

He stared at the clippings, much astonished. He looked them over, or pretended to, and got a

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glimmer of this double tragedy. In an hour like this!

"Where did you get them?"

"They came this morning, anonymously. Read them."

But Maddox got up and deposited the clippings in her lap. Then he walked over to a window, came back, and faced her.

"Are they true? Just that one about the inventor. We won't bother about the others. Is that true?"

"Did you read the editorial in the *Herald* this morning?"

"I read that. But is this true? Did my father let a human being die like that?"

"All right. It's my business—curing bodies and curing minds. Yes; all these things are true, little lady. But what your father did last night cleans the slate, in the eyes of God as well as man. You baby! Don't you dare sit in judgment on your father at this moment. He is a man, and I'm proud to be his friend. He has been alone. He never knew what love was until you came into his life. He is a strong man, and strong men, untempered by love, are ruthless. I have seen what you could not see—the change. The moment he discovered he loved you, he wanted to wipe out the past. Whatever you wanted done,

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he did; but he went at it in a circuitous manner for fear you might learn the truth before he had proved himself. He loves you. This love has cleared his vision and humanized him. I know. A mind so clean and pure as yours becomes horrified, naturally. You were both yourselves last night—your real selves. He is going on doing fine and noble things; so are you. And the noblest thing you can do is never to let him know. The soul of him was all right; it was only the shell that was bad; and that has been knocked off. He will never know that you know; and he will be happy."

Betty gathered the clippings in her hand and carried them to the fire.

"That's it; and throw recollection along with them. They will never again call him the Lord of Polygon Hill. Betty, he had travelled to the point where he didn't know any better. Then you came. You are going to forgive him besides?"

"Oh, yes. I love him; and I understand now. Never shall he know that I know. I have always loved him, since I was a little child. There wasn't anybody else for me to love." A pause, and rather shyly she asked: "What did Brandon Cathewe mean when he wrote 'Mansfield Comes Home'?"

"What I've just been telling you: that your father has found himself through you."

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"And I . . . I have misjudged Brandon Cathewe?"

"I'll tell you. A few hundred years ago he would be wearing a surtout with a cross on it and he would be outside the Wall of Jerusalem. I love that boy. I wish God had given me a son like him. And your father admires him secretly. He tried to avoid you because he didn't want you to know him as he is. It would have made you doubt your father. You have met his mother. He couldn't be very bad with such a mother. He misjudged you, too. He thought you had deserted France; that you were only a giddy butterfly."

"Whereas . . . I am an ant. Who is he, really? From where does he come?"

"There's only one way to find that out. Go to his mother."

"Go to his mother," repeated Betty, dreamily. "But I am keeping you from your patients!"

"I'm mighty glad you called me in. I don't know who could have mailed you those clippings, but he's done a fine service for us all. Good-bye, little lady. And remember!"

"I shan't forget . . . my father, because he loves me!" Her eyes glistened with tears.

The doctor fumbled with his handkerchief,

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rubbed his nose violently, snatched up his famous black bag, and hurried from the room.

Betty remained motionless for a space. A new thought had occurred to her. Brandon Cathewe. She would give him back his newspaper. Having come to this decision, she returned to her room. It was then she espied once more Nancy's letter. This time she opened it.

It had the appearance of a page of manuscript that had been crumpled and smoothed out. There was a signature scrawled across its face. She had to approach a window to decipher this scrawl: "From George Cottar to Nancy Maddox, his friend." Cottar? Nancy knew Cottar? Betty lowered the sheet and stared off, as if out there, up from the horizon, the solution would presently become manifest. Cottar. Nancy had never told her that she knew Cottar. To keep a secret like this! That was so unlike Nancy. And why had Nancy given the sheet to her, with instructions which had struck her curiously at the time? George Cottar, the novelist; and Nancy knew him!

She raised the sheet again. Probably some phrase Nancy wanted her to read and pass judgment on. Now it came to her, upon this second perusal, that the handwriting, though in lead was strangely familiar. Then she came upon a little cross where a period should have been.

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There fell upon her senses a roaring like the falling of mighty waters. Until this died away, she was powerless to move. When she could impart mobility to her feet, with her heart fluttering wildly she ran to the precious Florentine box. She opened a letter and laid it beside the sheet of manuscript. The same hand had written them both.

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CHAPTER XXIII

THAT which followed was rather an incoherent adventure. Betty had passed through a series of tremendous emotions, and she had not recovered her poise. Ordinarily she would not have rushed off to Nancy's tempestuously. But a great deal of her world had been knocked from under, and she desperately wanted all trembling things laid for good. She wanted her illusions smashed, all of them, so that when she started life anew the future would be reasonably clear. Either George Cottar had played with her, or he hadn't. Either he was young and free, or he wasn't. The question must never arise again to trouble her; it must be settled within this hour.

When the Maddox door opened to admit her, Betty flew past the astonished maid, never pausing to inquire if Nancy were at home.

"Nancy?" she cried, running from room to room. "Nancy?"

The maid, rather inclined toward the belief that Miss Mansfield was a bit out of her head from the exertions of the previous night, gave

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chase resolutely, catching the visitor by the arm as she was about to mount the stairs.

"Miss Nancy is rolling bandages in the office. Won't you please be seated until I call her?"

Betty flung herself free and rushed into the official side of the house. Nancy, having felt the jar of running feet, entered the waiting room at the same time as Betty.

"Oh, Nancy!"

"Why, Betty, you ought to be in bed!"

"Where can I find him?"

"You want father?"

"No, no! I want George Cottar—the man who wrote those letters!"

"It is really serious, then?"

"Haven't I told you? I must see him. I want all my disillusions over with. I want to tear him out of my heart and out of my mind . . . or find if he has really been there at all! . . . You must think me quite mad. I am, at this moment. I don't want you to tell me what he's like; I want you to tell me where he is."

"You ought to be in bed, with all you've gone through." Nancy opened her arms.

"I've gone through so much! . . . Things I can't tell you. I want no more mysteries, no more puzzles. . . . I'm tired!" And Betty laid her head on Nancy's shoulder.

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"The Brushwood Boy—George Cottar."

"Why did he give me up?"

"Circumstance was a two-edged sword; it cut both ways. Do you know that the whole town is ringing with the praise of you and your father? His poor face and hand! And you!—leaving the way you did! You must have ruined that sable coat."

"I did. Don't tantalize me. You gave me that sheet of manuscript so that I would recognize the writing and compare it with my letters. But how did you suspect?"

"I didn't. I knew."

"And you sent it to me. . . ."

"Because there was no earthly reason why I should keep the truth from you, once I knew it. But I'll want that sheet back. One doesn't meet a celebrated author every day. What did you want to see father about?"

"I . . . I know everything, now, Nancy."

"You understand? I mean, you understand the marvellous change you have wrought in your father?"

Betty drew back, her chin up. "I think he is glorious! . . . But I was stricken with horror until your father came. If I had to have any other father than my own, I'd want yours. My fault was that I had put my father up a little too high.

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I had built a fairy story for myself and lived in it. I love him; but it isn't with the love of yesterday. To-day I am human myself. Did you know Cottar when we were in Washington?"

"No. Quite recently, and by accident."

"But you have not been away since then! . . . He is here, in Bannister!"

"I'm a wretch, Betty! Come with me."

Nancy led the way into the living room and stopped only when she reached a window from which the street was to be seen.

"What do you see from this window?" she asked.

"From here? I seem to be very stupid, for I don't see anything."

"See, then, that temple of fine dreams and music—the little white house with the picket fence. For the man who wrote those letters to you, and George Cottar, and Brandon Cathewe—they are one, Betty. And I can quite understand why you never suspected. Do you know what I should do if I were you? I'd run across as fast as I could. He isn't there. I saw him leave for his office about an hour ago. But his mother will receive you. I want but one promise: that you will never tell him I betrayed him. Run, dear, run! Nothing lasts very long in this workaday world. Run!"

Betty never had any clear recollection of what happened between the moment of this astounding

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revelation and her advent upon the path to the street. Foggily she retained the impression that Nancy had fairly pushed her forth. The cold, fresh air, blowing into her face, stabilized her wavering thoughts. She could not enter that house now. Brandon Cathewe! Her memory revived that scene upon the hill: his tenderness to Sandy, his amusing comments, the gravity with which he discussed the life of the ant. Fabre in the original, and the truth had gone over her head! She had known that he was not of Bannister; and yet that had suggested nothing. The fineness of his mind, his air of breeding, the wonderful creature who called him Sonny! . . . She had been totally blind!

From behind her curtain Nancy watched. In no sense was this act one of espionage. There was on her face that serenity of expression which is the flower of renunciation. A ghost—a very dim ghost—of a smile moved her lips. She could very well visualize the quandary in which Betty found herself. Social convention nowadays is less an acquisition than a legacy; and Nancy understood that what was now confusing her friend was this invisible wall. Would she recognize it as an *impasse*, or would she plunge through it? And there was besides the lingering pall of dazzlement.

She saw Betty hurry to the sidewalk. But

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once there it became evident that the impellent lost its force. Betty halted; she looked up and down the street, back at the window, then across the street. At length, with a step which seemed to acquire dignity as it progressed, Betty crossed the street, opened the gate and latched it behind her, and approached the door.

Nancy laughed. There is no way of approaching this laughter analytically, since Nancy herself did not know why it had sprung past her lips. She returned to the consultation office, to her work. Bandage after bandage she rolled. Her father would need them all on his rounds that night. Occasionally she stopped work and let her gaze wander about this smelly but immaculate room, with its white enamelled woodwork and iron, its glass cases filled with glittering instruments, its stands with glass tops. It quite fit her mood, this little white cabinet of mercy and pain.

Happiness, thought Betty. And what if she let it slip past for the want of a little courage to reach out for it? Who or what had installed in her this distaste to go forward with the adventure, this subtle acknowledgment of rules of conduct which one person obeyed simply because another had previously obeyed them?

She had no plan, no marshalled words and

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phrases. She stepped into the hallway as she would have stepped into a mirror-maze, trusting instinct to carry her through. But one thing she did know: that all depended upon her reception.

Mrs. Cathewe came forward, and, with that interpretative insight which was the quality of her genius, gathered the girl in her arms. Not a word; just took Betty in her arms and held her. Instantly Betty knew that never again would there be walls. Thus they stood for three or four minutes.

"This is the way I would have had you come. No roundabout and winding paths—straight to the fount. And who but Sonny's mother shall tell you who and what Sonny is?"

"There is so much to ask."

"So much to tell. Sonny is always right. Genius has an eye like one of those chemical rays: nothing may hide from it. And yet, until he met you on the hill that day, he doubted his vision. Come with me. What a wonder-child you are!"

When they were seated upon the divan, Betty locked her fingers tightly and began.

"I did not know until last night that he was the editor of the *Herald*. I was very stupid through it all. Even your avoidance of giving me your name did not illuminate a corner of the puzzle. Then last night at Nancy's the truth came out.

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I was hard and bitter to him. I did not know then that my father. . . ."

A hand flew toward her lips. "You shall not say it!" cried Mrs. Cathewe. "Your father was magnificent last night. What is the past against an hour like that? The lives of three little children at the risk of his own! There is not a soul in Bannister this day that isn't the better for the reading of the unselfish deed. His surrender to you through love is the most beautiful thing I ever heard. And you bought Sonny's newspaper from under him, to defend your father! You are a pair of lions. You should have heard Sonny praise you both. He was very happy over it."

"Happy!"

"Yes. A phase of his task in life has come to a happy ending. We can leave Bannister now, content."

"Leave Bannister?—because I told him that after January he . . . No, no! He shall have his newspaper back. He shall go on with his work. Don't you understand? I didn't know."

"Sonny will be glad. He found himself here. The blind alleys he's been in and out of, searching for the way!"

"Did . . . did he ever tell you about some letters he wrote to me?"

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"Yes. Between Sonny and me there are no secrets."

"Did he mean what he wrote?" asked Betty, miserable with shame.

"With every drop of blood in him, with every fibre of his manhood!"

Betty broke down completely. The taut string had snapped. But the mothering she received was compensation. All her life she wanted arms like these.

"There is good in everybody," presently began the owner of those arms. "There was good in the man who broke my heart and nearly ruined Sonny—his father. For there are still rough spots in the road. Will you stand the test? Will you stop this side, or will you go on? It will take the rarest kind of courage—moral. For the hour has come when you must know everything. Cathewe was my maiden name. There was always the possibility, however, of running across someone who had known me under the other name."

"Where did he first see me?"

Betty could not see the smile of tender irony that flashed across the lips of the woman who was about to recount for the second time the drab tragedy of her life. Romance! What were yesterdays to this child who hungered for to-morrows?

"He saw you in London one night, at the Savoy

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restaurant. The following afternoon you went aboard the same ship."

"I knew it! I knew that I had seen him somewhere. He didn't know who I was?"

"Not at that time."

"Just saw me!"—in wonder.

"Just that. He went to your father the next morning and asked if he might pay court to you. Imagine it! He wore old clothes and was living with the steerage passengers to get colour for his new book. Your father looked upon the affair as a great joke, not being able to gauge Sonny. He made a sardonic proposal, and Sonny accepted it. He was to come to Bannister and make a name for himself. He was never to seek you in any fashion. So Sonny wrote you those letters, hoping to trap your interest and hold it while he was fighting his way to you. And I came to keep him company. What are obstacles to a man like that? But soon the road took a baffling and sinister twist. He bought the *Herald* as a means of reaching you; borrowed the purchase money from a friend, the security being all I had in the world—a small cotton plantation. The newspaper presently became an obligation; and recognizing that, he saw that he must give you up."

"I understand. I searched the crowds for him. I studied every new face I saw; strained my ears

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for some sign. And even now, but for Nancy, I'd never have known! Do you know, I loved you that first night. The thought of you kept drawing me; and I came again, uninvited."

"I tried to make you love me." There was a pause. "Why must the innocent always suffer with the guilty? What had Sonny and I done that the black shadow of the name that is legally ours must steal away our sunshine always? The name of Digby Hallowell will mean nothing to you; but your father would recall it. My husband was a thief, Betty, and he died in prison. A thief—the most unforgivable kind. When a burglar enters a house he at least risks his life. My husband did not risk his; he did not even risk his comfort. He sat in a beautiful office and wove his spider web for the poor and ignorant, who had none to advise them. . . . Did you shudder then?"

Betty did not answer.

"Ah! Already the obstacles in the road terrify you. Your father. . . ."

"And shall my father sit in judgment on Sonny's?" asked Betty, quietly. "The shudder was instinctive. It is the second time to-day I have shuddered. But go on."

"I was born in the South; but at the age of ten I was taken to Europe by an aunt who saw that there was music in me, that I possessed inter-

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pretative genius. My parents were dead. My inheritance was a small but lucrative cotton plantation. I studied in Paris, Berlin, Leipzic, Vienna. At musicales and soirées I became fairly well known. I was preparing for concert work. All the masters said that I had a brilliant future. When my aunt died, the annuity which supported us ceased automatically, but most of the beautiful things you see in this room fell to me. My own inheritance, untouched all those years, had compounded. So I had enough for the necessities of life, and a little amusement besides. Somehow I had lost America. I had no desire to return. I was in the Volksgarten in Vienna one afternoon when a very handsome man in the early thirties sat down in a chair near me. Apparently he was oblivious to my propinquity. Some children were playing near by. One of them stumbled and fell, and the stranger sprang to its assistance, brushing the bruised knees. 'Poor little codger!' he said in English; and at once I knew that he was an American. I was alone in the world, eighteen, and bubbling with romance. I met him again and again. Oh, I loved him. He was charming. He was mad about children; he was genuinely fond of music, paintings, books. And his love for me was the one great, honest thing in his life. It wouldn't have been so hard otherwise.

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We were married. Remember, there was no one to advise me. I did not want to return to America. My world was the musical centres of Europe. So he agreed to clear up his affairs—he was a broker—as soon as he reasonably could, and come to Europe to live."

The telephone bell rang sharply, but neither of them heard it.

"Sonny came. There followed four wonderful summers. Digby would arrive in May and go back in October. The crash came the fourth winter. He was arrested for selling bogus oil and mining stock. Here in America it was the newspaper sensation of the day. The shock nearly drove me crazy. Only the thought of Sonny saved me. Each time he came to Europe, Digby brought a fortune in stocks and bonds, which were turned into French consols and British Rands and assigned unrestrictedly to me. Do you comprehend the cunning? To put all these ill-gotten gains where the United States could not possibly touch them! But he overreached. He was already in prison when the news came. I went to him as fast as I could, for I had known only the good in him, and believed that there was some terrible mistake, some misdirection of justice. It often comes to me that if I had gone back with him the first time, I might have seen what was

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going on and saved him. My very selfishness served as a lure to drive him on. He caught pneumonia in prison and died before I could get to him."

"Too late to forgive him?"

"Would you have forgiven him?"

"Didn't you?"

"Yes. He had my cable in his hand when he died. Until I reached Liverpool, I was absolutely in the dark. From Vienna to Liverpool, without a glimmer of the truth! I cabled him that I was coming, that I forgave him. Even to this day I am torn. I never knew in the least this other man; I had known only the handsome lover, the gay and charming father of Sonny. It was as if he had stepped out of the room and vanished, and that somebody had stolen and defiled his name. Broken, bewildered, and disillusioned I returned to Europe. Over there no one would know. I could not restore the money to the poor things who had been robbed. I would have been the victim of colossal impositions, so an attorney said. But I never touched a penny of it. It went on growing, naturally, and began to terrify me. It was like some prehistoric monster that had grown up overnight in my house, and there was no way out for him without crumbling the edifice. I came to a decision at last. Sonny must have his say. But

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he should not be told until he was old enough to keep his balance. Three millions, and a world before him: temptation. Nevertheless, he should have his say."

Betty reached blindly for the speaker's hand, found it, and pressed it strongly.

"Vienna became intolerable—the associations. So I bought a small villa just outside of Florence, on the road to Fiesole, and devoted myself to Sonny's education. I never ceased to strike upon one key that he was American. For in the end I wanted him to come to America and make that name worthy again. After all, a name is nothing. It is what you do under it. I might have gone on the concert stage, but all my ambition was dead.

So while he studied, I taught music and languages so that he would have a little money when he came of age. When he was twenty I told him the story. I told him what his name was, for we were then using Cathewe. I added that if he so willed, he could live all his days in luxury, have all his whims gratified. Without a word, he walked out into the little garden, and he spent the night there, walking. I could see him in the moonlight from my bedroom window. He came to me at dawn. 'Little mother, I'll take the burden on these shoulders. I'll find some way to give it back. I've got to take the name and make it clean again.

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To give these millions indirectly to the poor, to spend it in the interest of those human beings who know not how to defend themselves!' He put his arms around me; and I knew then that I possessed a son beyond the dreams of motherhood."

"I understand now," said Betty, softly, "what Doctor Maddox meant when he said your son should be wearing a white surtout with a cross on it."

The mother sighed. She had at least won the daughter; but there was still a grim rock in the path. It would take a superman to overlook the blood of Digby Hallowell.

"Sonny took the funds to New York. He went to a great banker, who had once been my father's friend, and outlined his plans. The account was accepted; and the name of Hallowell went upon the books. I remained in Italy. He had his career to make; and he was thoroughly American in his outlook. Eventually he became a reporter on one of the great newspapers, and discovered that he could write. A month each summer he spent with me; he was at work on his second novel when he saw you."

"George Cottar?"

"A brushwood boy. Isn't he? Here in Bannister he found the path he had been seeking. His dreams became substances. He could have turned

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over those millions to France and Belgium and been rid of the incubus at once. But Sonny has ideas. This money belonged to Americans, and it should flow back to them. To him the *Herald* is a trust; it belongs to the poor of Bannister. But he is still the son of a thief."

"And I am the daughter of Dunleigh Mansfield. Play for me! I want music, brilliant music, tremendous crashes of melody. If you play anything softly, I shall cry!"

She led the mother to the piano. Then she seized a Hindu pillow—such as Scheherezade might have curled upon—and dropped it on the floor, sat, and rested her head against a piano leg.

"God sometimes lets people understand each other; doesn't He?"

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CHAPTER XXIV

CATHEWE sat in his official swivel chair and teetered, his fingers locked under his chin. He had read such proofs as he could find, skimmed through the rival sheet, dictated his correspondence; and now there was nothing to do but think. One thought was predominant, not submersible. As often as he thrust it down, as often it returned. His philosophy was inutile. He bowed to a primal fact, that the only perfect philosophy is that which is applicable to the other fellow's case. Having human faults, he had failed in a great emprise.

It wasn't the thought of losing Betty. One could not lose something one never had possessed. He had laid away that dream in lavender the moment he had discovered Mansfield's trail. Upon this subject his philosophy had served; he had had months of stern thinking to fortify this acceptancy of the inevitable. Still, the love and the hurt were there. What had happened was this: by a singular species of blindness he had closed the way out. He had had every moral right to use the tainted fund in relation to the purchase of the

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Herald. He should not have hesitated an instant. It was one of the channels through which the fund was to flow back to the poor. It constituted a trust; and by his talent and energy it had already become a remarkable court of appeal for the poor of Bannister. In a way, he had betrayed this trust. Subconsciously, he had been endeavouring to make the *Herald* his own, a kind of monument to himself. And he had not sensed it clearly until this hour. He had begun to look upon himself as a superman; and here he was, quite as humanly deficient as any of his neighbours.

To move on—whither? He had transplanted himself in Bannister and taken root healthily. Now he must dig himself up and go on, the millstone still around his neck. It would be impossible to go forward with hope and courage. Never again would there be such an opportunity. On the threshold of turning his dreams into realities, and to have betrayed himself! He was this day a minority stockholder; his usefulness was drawing to a close.

The telephone buzzed.

"Hello!" he called, rather grateful for the diversion.

"Is this Mr. Cathewe on the wire?" asked a woman's voice.

"Yes."

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"This is the city hospital. Mr. Mansfield wants to see you immediately. He instructed me to emphasize the importance of this interview."

"Tell him I shall be up as soon as I can get a taxi around."

Cathewe was not agitated in the least; he was not even interested. There pervaded him that peculiar calm which is the aftermath of defeat. Nothing Mansfield might say could have the power to ruffle the mental attitude of Digby Hallowell's son. Indeed, some flash of prescience conveyed to him that Dunleigh Mansfield was about to empty the bottom of the sack, confront him with the history of his father. Half an hour later he stood at the side of his enemy's cot. With his sound arm, Mansfield indicated the chair; and his victim sat down.

"Sit close. I can't talk clearly. I want you to hear distinctly what I have to say."

Cathewe drew the chair to the head of the cot. "I have an idea that it relates to my father."

"In my coat at the foot of the bed is a long envelope. Get it."

Cathewe obeyed; but as he raised the coat to search the pockets, the pungent odour of fire and water struck his nose. He had almost forgotten the fine, unselfish deed of the night before. He found the envelope.

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"Open it," ordered the man on the cot.

One glance confirmed Cathewe's suspicions. The envelope contained the complete history of the trial and conviction of Digby Hallowell.

"Well?" he said, calmly.

"Ready to admit that I hold you in the hollow of my hand?"

"No. No man shall ever hold me in the hollow of his hand. But you force me to move on; and I was beginning to consider Bannister as my home. It's the only American home I've ever known. I was born on the other side. Anyhow, I fought squarely."

"Meaning that I did not?"

Cathewe tapped the envelope. "Do you call this fair?"

"It was the only weapon I could find."

"This doesn't join with the fine thing you did last night. After all, I must admit that you puzzle me."

"I return the compliment. You had unlimited resources. How did it happen that Betty was able to buy the control?"

"Evidently I wanted the *Herald* for myself—wanted something not touched by the taint. There was, unknown to me, a strain of vanity in my make-up. I take it that the significance of this interview is, that I sell out my interest and

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move on, or you will print the story in the *Times*. Am I correct?"

"Will you fight?"

"I might, if I stood alone. But my mother has been through enough."

Silence.

"You're an odd young man! You came here originally because you thought you loved my daughter."

"It's in my nature to play the fool at times."

"A man who knows what he wants when he sees it. I like that sort for my lieutenants. Oh, don't be alarmed. I'm not offering you a job. I am merely classifying you. What was the main idea, anyhow?"

"You mean regarding the money my father left? To give it back to the poor. To make the newspaper a bulwark between your kind and mine. To build a great hospital, endowed, to which the poor from the ends of the world might come and find aid without cost. A great free dispensary where the unfortunate woman might also find succour and not be callously sent back to the gutter with her baby. The newspaper to doctor their minds and the hospitals to doctor their bodies. To rebuild their faith in humanity; to make American citizens out of them. Shall I put this envelope back in your coat?"

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"She crept back into his arms, all her mischief gone. 'Love me always like that! . . . And don't be afraid of Daddy!'"

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"No. She sat there in that chair all night, holding my hand. Toward morning she slept. I was in a good deal of pain. It was very still. I fell to thinking. Instead of counting sheep jumping over a fence, I looked myself over, from your point of view, from her point of view, happen she learns the truth. I did not summon you to threaten you. Still, I had to test you. Your chin is still up, and that's the sign I needed. I don't want that envelope. Destroy the stuff. Make Bannister your home; build your free dispensary. What I really wanted was . . . to have you . . . take my hand."

"To shake hands?" cried Cathewe, figuratively swept off his feet.

"Why not? I needed a licking, and you were the only man in the world who had the courage to attempt it. I'm no fool. I know men. I want to be the friend of a man who, in these hard, matter-of-fact days, has the courage to walk where angels fear to tread. A smile accompanies that, but it's not visible to you on account of these bandages. A curious idea thrust me into that shack last night. Oh, yes; I saw the poor little tikes, and was glad to save them. But that isn't it. I fought you because I was afraid of you. You were a menacing wedge between me and my daughter. On the day she learned the truth, I

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might lose her. Nothing else matters now but her love. She is extremely imaginative. A deed like last night's would appeal to her. She would always have that moment to throw into the scales. She has opened all the doors of my mind and my heart; I can see and feel. Yesterday I would not have understood you; to-day I do. There's another secret in that envelope. You overlooked it. You are Cottar, the novelist. But I am offering my hand to the son of Digby Hallowell. Will you take it?"

The strength of the hand that closed over his caused a flash of stinging pain. The wince had puckered the burns.

"You understand?"

"Yes. She has made all these things possible."

"That makes our understanding perfect. Her beauty is the least of her. Do you remember you said that? You saw in a glance what it took me three years to find out. Old Johnny Maddox told me to give Betty what she wanted; to give him what he wanted; to find out what you wanted and give it to you. This morning she spoke of some letters. Very clever of you. She didn't suspect, naturally. Just the sort of romance that would appeal to her. You and I are going to make Bannister a perfect city. But I must do my share in my own fashion. I simply can't have her know;

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at least, until I have made substantial progress. You shall have your paper back, of course. I am growing tired. Just a little more. You could have come to me and demanded I fulfill my end of that mad bargain. You were honest, and you declined. Your whimsicality is on the surface; underneath you are unchangeable. So it occurs to me that if you gave up Betty, it was not that you had ceased to care. Am I right?"

"Yes."

"As a man cares but once?"

"But once."

"Then . . . go and find her."

"You mean that?"

"Why not? You are the son of Digby Hallowell, but she is the daughter of Dunleigh Mansfield. Between these two fathers, where's the choice? I merely stayed within the law and your father played the game outside. I threw away all the glorious hours that are before you. I sent Betty to France because I didn't care to be bothered with her. Find her, and when you find her, tell her I sent you. And then . . . both of you . . . come back here!"

Cathewe's taxi went up Polygon Hill after the manner of the tank, now so celebrated in history—slowly, ponderously, and heartrendingly. Streetcars got in the way, other taxis, lumber and coal

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wagons, and pedestrians. Eventually he reached the Mansfield place.

The butler, upon opening the door, eyed him with repellent loyalty.

"Miss Mansfield is not at home, sir"; and suggestively started the door toward the latch.

"Just a moment. I am sent by Mr. Mansfield himself. He wishes me to find his daughter."

"I do not know where she went, sir. It is probable that she is with Miss Maddox. The doctor was here a while gone."

"May I use the telephone?"

Reluctantly the butler ushered the enemy into the study and indicated the telephone. His gesture was full of suppressed indignation.

The Maddox maid replied to the first call. No; Miss Mansfield had gone across to the Cathewes'. The second call was not answered, though he kept Central busy for two or three minutes. Vaguely alarmed, he returned to the taxi. In the end, he found himself in his own hallway, breathless with the chase.

Music. She had come to hear his mother play. This accounted for the unanswered telephone call. Suddenly he felt shaky all over. Now that he was here, he did not know what he was going to do. He feared the bewildering turn of events. It was incredible that fate should relent absolutely, that

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she hadn't some shabby trick up her sleeve. But an old quatrain recurred to him:

> He either fears his fate too much,
> Or his deserts are small,
> Who dares not put it to the touch
> To win or lose it all.

He opened the door of the living room and stood on the threshold. Never before had he heard his mother play the Fourth Ballade with such fire and passion. She swept through the magnificent finale with a brilliance of technique and feeling that rivalled De Pachmann at his best.

And the girl there, seated on the floor, her exquisite profile, against the dark wine of the rosewood, as beautifully defined as a cameo! Her eyes were closed in dreamy ecstasy.

Here, after what had taken place last night! There could be only one meaning: that she knew everything. Maddox! She had sent for the doctor and in some manner had forced the truth from him. On top of this came the recollection of the cub reporter's confession of having sent Betty a complete series of clippings. She had confronted Maddox with them, and the old fellow had told her the truth. And somehow he must prevail upon her never to let her father know. Here!—because she knew also that he was the

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author of those letters! Hadn't she come from Nancy's? Out of that abysmal gloom of two hours gone, this miraculous sunshine!

The performer dropped her hands. The piano was still singing as she turned her head.

"Sonny?"

Betty opened her eyes, and slowly rose to her feet, numb with an inexplicable terror, not unlike that which childhood finds in dark rooms. What had happened? This: it was the first time she had ever seen the man who had written those wonderful letters—the exquisite proems to the idyl of this hour. She had come boldly into his house in the pursuit of happiness. She saw now the immodesty of the act. The knowledge sent all the blood into her heart, then flung it into her cheeks—burgundy in an alabaster cup. Always he would think that she had sought him. The shame of it!

She stood with her back to the piano, staring. Tableau. Then she reached backward, toward the bench, toward the arms she wanted, needed. She was afraid. She turned desperately—to find that she had been betrayed. The bench was vacant. Mrs. Cathewe had stolen quietly from the room.

"I . . . She has gone!" Betty stammered.

He crossed the room quickly, but he did not touch her. "There is no doubt in your mind?"

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"Doubt of what?"—beginning to recover her poise.

"Of me? That I love you, that I loved you the first time I saw you?"

"Which of you three is talking?"

"Which of . . . What do you mean?"—bewildered.

"Is it Brandon Cathewe, George Cottar, or Brandon Hallowell?"

"All three of us. We all love you! Can you care, just a little?"

"But you gave me up!"

"Only physically. For weeks I've been torn by wild horses."

"I'm glad of that!" —now sure of herself, of him, of all the world.

"Glad that I was unhappy?"

"Wasn't I unhappy, too? Didn't you jilt me?"

"Do you care?"

"Well . . . perhaps." A pause. "I'm beginning to wonder if you really wrote those letters."

"Why?"

"Well, the writer of those beautiful love-letters wouldn't stand as you do, just asking questions."

"What would he do?" —falling into her mood.

"He would sweep me into his arms, kiss me, put me on his horse and ride away . . . and ask questions . . ."

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"Afterward!"

When she pressed back from him, she was breathless. "And now I'm suspicious."

"Suspicious?"

"You did that . . . overly well!"

"The wonder of you!"

She crept back into his arms, all her mischief gone. "Love me always like that! . . . And don't be afraid of Daddy."

"I'm not," he replied. "Your father has made all this possible. He sent me to you."

"He did? I love him! And he shall never know that I know. To want to do fine and noble things because he has learned to love me!" Another pause. "Is there anything now on Jupiter you want?"

There was only one way to answer that.

THE END

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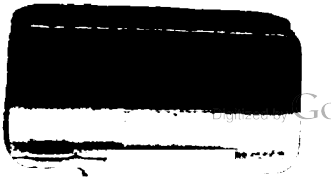

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